Broad and Alien is the World

A NOVEL BY

Ciro Alegría

PRIZE WINNER

LATIN-AMERICAN PRIZE NOVEL CONTEST

Broad and Alien Is The World

By CIRO ALEGRÍA

Translated from the Spanish by Harriet de Onís

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Part One

1

Rosendo Maqui and the Community

An ill omen!

A dark lithe snake crossed the road leaving behind, in the fine foot-worn dust, the shallow groove of its trail. It passed very swiftly, too fast for the Indian Rosendo Maqui to get out his machete. By the time the blade of steel gleamed in the air, the long burnished body of the serpent was slipping away into the bushes by the roadside.

What an ill omen!

Rosendo put his machete back into the leather sheath hanging from a narrow strap that showed dark against the red wool of his sash and stood there, not knowing what to do. He wanted to go on his way, but his feet felt heavy. He had been frightened. Then he noticed that the bushes formed a clump of undergrowth where the snake might well be hidden. He would have to get rid of the reptile and its evil warning. That is the way to exorcise the threatened evil of snakes or owls. He took off his poncho, to move more freely among the branches, and removed his leather sandals, to keep from making a noise. Then he stealthily circled the spot and quietly entered the bushes, machete in hand. If any of the villagers had seen him then, in his shirt sleeves, as tense as a dog on a hot trail, they might have said:

"What's the old man doing there? Is he losing his good sense?"

The bushes were unicos, their leaves smooth and shining, their branches gnarled and loaded with purple berries. Rosendo Maqui was very fond of them, but he did not taste even one. His eyes, glittering with excitement and eagerness like those of an animal in wait for its prey, scanned every inch of ground, peered into the secret places where the ant cuts down and carries off its blade of grass, where the fly buzzes of its love, where the seed germinates that bursts from the ripened fruit or falls from the droppings of a bird, and where the beetle forever digs its perfect tunnel. There was nothing there but this prolific hidden life. Suddenly a sparrow flew out and Rosendo saw the nest, resting in the fork of a branch, where two young ones displayed

their triangular beaks and their shivering nakedness. The sparrow that had flown out returned with its mate, and both of them hopped chirruping from branch to branch, as near the nest as their fear of man would let them come. Rosendo Maqui poked around the roots with renewed zeal, but he could find no trace of the sly reptile. He came out of the thicket, sheathed his machete, put on the garments he had laid aside for the moment—at other times the bright colors of his poncho made him happy—and went on his way.

Yes, an ill omen!

His mouth was dry, his temples throbbed, and he felt tired. Looking for a snake was nothing to tire Rosendo, but as he thought it over, he was afraid. He soon came to a dwindling brook that carried its transparent current quietly along, and dipping the brim of his straw hat into it he managed to collect enough water to satisfy his thirst. The long draughts of cool water refreshed him, and he continued his trip with lighter step. The snake had spied the nest of sparrows from some place on the slope, and had crawled down to eat them, Rosendo said to himself, thinking it over. He just happened to be going by at that moment. That was all. Or maybe the wily thing, seeing him coming, had said:

"Here's a good chance to scare a Christian." But man has a tendency to look on the bright side of things. Maybe what the snake really meant to say was:

"There goes a heedless Christian who doesn't want to see that misfortune is at hand. I'll go tell him."

That must be it since he couldn't find the snake. A man can't go against fate.

What an ill omen! What an ill omen!

Rosendo Maqui was coming back from the hills where he had gone in search of some herbs the wisewoman had ordered for his old wife. The truth is that he went because he also liked to test the strength of his muscles against the steep slopes, and then, once he had mastered them, to fill his eyes with horizons. He loved the broad spaces and the magnificent grandeur of the Andes. He rejoiced in the sight of snow-covered Urpillau, hoary and wise as an old Inca sage; rough,

tempestuous Huarca, a warrior in perpetual struggle with the mist and the wind; serried Huillac, in which an Indian sleeps forever, face upward to the sky; crouching Puma, like a mountain lion poised to spring; pudgy Suni, of peaceful habits and somewhat ill at ease among its neighbors; pastoral Mamay, spread out in multicolored slopes of planted fields with hardly a rock showing from which to view the distance; and this one, and that one, and the other.

The Indian Rosendo attributed to them all the shapes and characters imaginable, and he spent long hours watching them. Deep within him, he believed that the Andes held the baffling secret of life. He gazed at them from one of the foothills of Taita or Father Rumi, a peak whose summit of blue rock thrust toward the sky like a lance. It was not so high as to be crowned with snow, nor so low as to make its ascent easy. Exhausted by the soaring force of its bold summit, Rumi flowed downward on both sides in blunt peaks that were easier to climb. Rumi means stone and its high slopes were mottled with blue stones, almost black, like moles among the yellow rustling hay fields. Just as the severity of the peak softened into the lower hills, so the grim desolateness of its stones melted away on the slopes. These became clad, as they descended, in bushes, grassy patches, trees, and tillable fields. Down one of its sides went a gentle ravine in all the rich beauty of its thick woods and its torrent of clear water. Rumi was both forbidding and gentle, stern and friendly, solemn and benign. The Indian Rosendo believed that he understood its physical and spiritual secrets as though they were his own. Or rather, those of his wife, for love is a stimulus to knowledge and possession. Except that his wife had grown old and sick, while Rumi was always the same, haloed by the prestige of immortality.

"Which is better," Rosendo tried to decide, "the earth or woman?"

He had never thought it through clearly, but he loved the earth very much.

It was on his return from these hills that the snake had crossed his path with its augury of misfortune. The road wound, full of curves, like another snake twisting down the slope. Rosendo Maqui, by looking hard, could make out the roofs of some of the houses. Suddenly the gentle oncoming wave of a ripe wheat field stopped short before him, then began again in the distance, and came toward him once more with its soft rhythm.

The gentle undulation was an invitation to the eye, and the man sat down on a huge stone. The wheat field was turning yellow, though it was still green in patches. It looked like one of those strange lakes of the mountains, showing all the colors of the rainbow from the refraction of the light. The heavy stalks swayed gently, with a little crackle. And in a moment Rosendo felt that the weight had lifted from his heart and that everything was beautiful and good like this waving field. This brought him serenity, and he decided that the omen was a forewarning of something inevitable to which the only response was resignation. Would it be the death of his wife? Or his own? After all, they were both very old and it was time for them to die. Everybody's turn comes. Could it be that some ill was to befall the community? Possibly. Yet he had always tried to be a good mayor.

From where he was sitting at the moment he could see the village, the modest and strong center of the community of Rumi, owner of much land and cattle. The road dropped down into a hollow to enter the town through a double row of little houses pompously called the Calle Real. About the middle the street opened on one side into what was also known pompously as the Village Square. In the center of the square, shaded by an occasional tree, rose a sturdy little church. The houses had roofs of red tile or gray thatch, and the walls were yellow or violet or red, depending on the color of the clay with which they were stuccoed. Each had its own garden patch in the back, sown in lima beans, cowpeas, vegetables, and bordered with leafy trees, prickly pears and magueys. It was a delight to see the gay picture the village made, and still more delightful to live there. What does civilization know? Of course, it can deny or affirm the excellence of this kind of life. Those who had made it their business to live here had known, for centuries, that happiness comes from justice, and justice from the common good. This had been established by time, force of tradition, man's will, and the unfailing gifts of the earth. The villagers of Rumi were content with their lot.

This is what Rosendo felt at this moment—felt rather than thought, although, at bottom, these things formed the substance of his thought —as he looked down on his native lares with satisfaction. On the rising slopes, on both sides of the road, the abundant wheat waved lush and tall. Beyond the rows of houses and their many-colored gardens, in a more sheltered spot, the corn rose tasseled and rustling. The sowing had been large and the harvest would be good.

The Indian Rosendo Maqui squatted there like an ancient idol. His body was gnarled and brown as the lloque—of knotted, iron-hard trunk—because he was part plant, part man, and part rock. His thick

lips were set in an expression of serenity and firmness under his flat nose. Behind his hard, jutting cheekbones shone his eyes, dark quiet lakes. The eyebrows were like beetling crags. It was almost as though Rosendo Maqui were cast in the image of his geography; as though the turbulent forces of the earth had fashioned him and his people in the likeness of the mountains. His temples were white like those of Urpillau. Like the mountain, he was a venerable patriarch. For many years, so many now that he could not remember them exactly, the villagers had kept him in the office of mayor, or head of the community, with the assistance of four selectmen who were not changed either. The village of Rumi said to itself, "The one who gives good advice today will give good advice tomorrow," and left the best men in their posts. Rosendo Maqui had shown himself to be alert and dependable, fair in his decisions and prudent.

He liked to recall how he had become, first, selectman and then mayor. A new field had been planted in wheat, and it came up so thick and grew so rank that the green of it looked almost blue. Then Rosendo went to the man who was mayor at that time.

"Taita," he said, "the wheat is growing so rank that it is going to fall, and the grain will rot on the ground and be no good."

The mayor had smiled and had consulted with the four selectmen who also smiled. Rosendo persisted:

"Taita, if you are in doubt, let me save half of it."

He had to argue with them a long time. Finally the council accepted his plan, and half of the big wheat field that the villagers had worked to plant was mowed down. As they bent over their scythes, looking browner than ever above the intense green of the wheat, they muttered:

"These are Rosendo's newfangled ideas."

"A waste of time," grumbled others.

But time had the last word. The mowed part came up again and stood erect. The untouched half, drunk with energy, grew top-heavy, toppled over, and lay flat on the ground. Then the villagers admitted he was right, saying:

"You know, we'll have to make Rosendo a selectman."

Rosendo smiled to himself, for he had once seen the same thing happen at the Sorave Ranch.

He gave good service when they made him selectman. He was active and he liked to know everything that was going on, though he was always tactful about it. Once a strange case came up. An Indian named Abdon happened to buy an old shotgun from a gipsy. What he really did was to take it in exchange for a load of wheat and eight soles. But, as was to be expected, this fantastic deal did not end here. Abdon took up deer hunting. Shots echoed from hill to hill. Every afternoon he would come back with one or two deer. To some of the villagers this seemed all right; others thought that Abdon should not be shooting these innocent animals, and that he was going to arouse the anger of the hills. The mayor, an old man named Ananias Challaya, to whom the hunter always presented a loin of venison, held his peace. Not that the gift really had much to do with his silence; his idea of the best way to govern was to say nothing. Meanwhile, Abdon went on hunting and the villagers went on gossiping. The objections to the hunting increased. One day a contentious Indian named Pillco came before the mayor, backed up by several others, to register his protest.

"Why is it," he asked, "that Abdon can kill deer whenever he feels like it? Besides, since the deer eat the grass on the land that belongs to the community, he ought to divide the meat up between everybody."

Mayor Ananias Challaya remained thoughtful; here was a case where he did not know how to apply his silent form of government. At this point Selectman Rosendo Maqui asked permission to speak, and said:

"I've been hearing this gossip and it's a pity the villagers waste their time like this. Abdon bought himself a shotgun because he wanted to, just the same as somebody else goes to town and buys a looking glass or a handkerchief. True, he kills deer; but the deer don't belong to anybody. Who can prove that the deer always feed on pasture that belongs to the community? They might have eaten for a while on a ranch nearby, and then have come over on our land. What's fair is fair. The property we hold in common is that which comes from the land we all work. The only one here who hunts is Abdon, and it's only right that he should enjoy the fruits of his skill. And I want to point out to

you that times are changing and we can't be too strict. If Abdon isn't happy with us he'll get bored and he might even go away. We want everybody to feel happy here, as long as the general interests of the community are respected."

Pillco and his friends, not knowing how to answer this speech, nodded their heads, and then went away saying:

"He thinks straight and his words are good. He would make a good mayor."

It might be mentioned that from then on the loins of venison changed their destination and went to Rosendo's house instead of the mayor's, and that other Indians, encouraged by Abdon's success, also bought themselves shotguns.

When the time came for old Ananias Challaya to become silent forever beneath the earth, it was Rosendo Maqui who was elected to take his place. Ever since, his fame as an upright, fair-dealing man had grown and he was always re-elected. The Indians for miles around talked of his good sense and his honesty, and country people often came from other places to have him decide their differences. The most famous was the decision he gave in the case of two farmers from the Llacta Ranch. They both had black mares, and it happened that both of the mares, at almost the same time, foaled colts that looked just alike. They were two handsome, playful little animals, black, too. And it happened that one of the colts suddenly died, perhaps from the kick of some irritable mare in the herd, and both men claimed the surviving colt. One accused the other of having used trickery at night to get the colt to go with the mare that was not its mother. So they went in search of justice to the wise mayor, Rosendo Maqui. He listened to both without moving a muscle and weighed the claims and counterclaims. Finally he said, after ordering the colt to be shut up in the community stableyard:

"Take away your mares and come back tomorrow."

The next day the litigants returned, without the mares. Then stern Rosendo Maqui said sharply, "Bring the mares, too," and he showed his annoyance at having to use more words than were necessary. When the litigants returned the judge ordered the mares to be tied at points equidistant from the gate of the stableyard, and he himself

opened the gate to let the colt out. When the mares saw it they both neighed at the same time, the colt stopped for a minute to look, and then in swift decision galloped joyously toward one of the excited mothers. And Mayor Rosendo Maqui said solemnly to the owner:

"The colt is yours."

To the other he said in explanation: "From the minute it is born the colt knows its mother's neigh."

The loser was the one who had been accused of using trickery, and he refused to abide by the decision and carried the dispute before a circuit judge. When the judge had heard his account, he said:

"It is a decision worthy of Solomon."

Rosendo heard about it and since he knew who Solomon was who, by the way, is the most popular wise man in the whole world—it made him happy. Since then many, many years have gone by.

And lo, now it is Mayor Rosendo Maqui who has grown old in his turn. He sits there on his rock, beside the wheat field, given over to his memories. His immobility makes him one with the rock, and both seem fused into a monolith. The afternoon is falling and the sun has a golden sheen. Below, in the village, the cowherd Inocencio shuts up the calves, and the mothers bemoan the separation with uneasy lowing. An Indian woman wearing a red skirt comes down a little path to the square. A woodcutter, bent beneath the weight of his load, goes down the middle of the road, and a horseman has stopped in front of Amaro Santos' house. The mayor deduces that it must be Amaro Santos himself, for he had borrowed a horse from him to do some errands in the near-by town. Now he gets off and walks slowly into the house. It is Amaro.

So life goes on just the same. Placid and tranquil. Another day is going by, tomorrow will come and will pass in its turn. But the community of Rumi will remain the same. If it were not for that damned snake! He recalled that the condors hurl themselves from the heights with the speed and precision of an arrow to seize a snake they have seen, and then while it writhes desperately in their claws they fly up with it, to eat it on the peaks where they rest. Condors have good eyes. Unfortunately he was not a condor. When he was a boy he used to

play the condor in the bands of dancers at the fairs. He would put on a condor skin with head, feathers, and all. The head with its hooked bill and stiff black crest rested on his own, and the black wings mottled with white came down his shoulders to his finger tips. He would dance around waving his wings and uttering hoarse cries. In his mind's eye he could still see old Chaqui, the wise old Indian of other times, whose memory had become a patchwork of truth and legend. Chaqui used to say that, in olden times, the Indians of Rumi believed themselves descendants of the condors.

It suddenly occurred to Rosendo Maqui that he was probably the only one who knew this statement of Chaqui's and many other matters dealing with the community. What if he should die suddenly? To be sure, beside the embers of the fire and of his failing memory, he had told many of the things that had happened, but not in order. He would do it soon, these nights when he sat beside the fire chewing his coca. His son Abram had good sense, and the selectmen and Anselmo would hear him too. Remember! He had seen and heard many things. Time had wiped out the superfluous details, and things came back to him clearly, like those stylized drawings the native artists prick out on their smooth, golden gourds. But some of the details had become too faint, and seemed to fade away, old age helping to erase them.

His first recollection—Rosendo tended to confuse his personal experiences with the general—was of an ear of corn. He was still a little child when his father handed it to him during the harvest and he looked at it a long time delighting in the rows of shining kernels. Beside him they had laid a bulging saddlebag. The saddlebag had fine red and blue stripes. It was because these were the first colors he remembered that he liked them so much, and he always had them on his ponchos and blankets. He liked yellow, too, no doubt because it was the same color as ripe wheat and corn. To be sure, he liked black just as well, because it was like the mysterious vastness of the night. Rosendo's old head sought its reasons. Finally, after sifting the matter carefully, he decided that he liked all the colors of the rainbow. Only the rainbow itself, so beautiful, was bad. If it got into the bodies of the villagers they fell sick. Then the wisewoman, Nasha Suro, would give them a ball of wool of seven colors to unravel, and then they would get well. Right now his old wife Pascuala was weaving him a saddlebag of many colors. She said:

"Bright colors, so I can see them. I can't see very well any more. I'm

old now."

Nevertheless, she had done a fine, even piece of work. She had taken very sick lately and often said she was going to die. Wrapped up in a red handkerchief, hanging beside his machete, were the herbs the wisewoman had prescribed: huarajo, cola de caballo, supiquegna, culen. The idea of death had grown in Pascuala since the night she dreamed she was walking behind her father who was dead. When morning came she said to her husband:

"I am going to die; my father came to get me last night."

Rosendo answered her, saying:

"Don't say such things. Who doesn't dream?" But his heart was full of sorrow and fear.

Theirs was a quiet affection. But it had not always been so. When they were young they had loved each other the way the parched earth loves the water. He sought her, night after night, like a sweet fruit in the darkness, and at times she gave herself to him, in the midst of the fields, beneath the sun, like a gazelle. They had had four sons and three daughters. Abram, the oldest, was a skillful horseman; Pancho, the second, had a steady hand with bulls; the next Nicasio, carved wooden bowls and spoons like an artist, and the youngest, Evaristo, knew a little about making spades and plowshares. Yet in spite of these fine accomplishments, they were first and foremost farmers, their lives were linked to the land. They were all married and had their own houses.

The daughters, Teresa, Otilia, and Juanacha were married, also. They knew what a woman should know; they could spin, weave, cook, and, of course, bear strong children. But Rosendo was not too happy about Evaristo. When he wanted to learn to be a smith, Rosendo sent him to town and apprenticed him to Don Jacinto Prieto, the blacksmith, and there, besides learning to work iron, he learned to drink more than was good for him. He not only drank corn liquor but also pure alcohol mixed with a little water—that savage stuff the townsfolk take. At times the fool even drank wood alcohol. And Rosendo didn't care much about Eulalia, the wife of his oldest son. She was a lazy, mischief-making slut, and it was a mystery how Abram, with his good sense, had made such a mistake. "Well, life is like that," the old mayor reflected to himself. He didn't count the children who had died of smallpox. But he did include the half-breed Benito Castro whom he had raised as his own and who had gone away years ago. Benito

always had had an itching foot and he would often go away and come back home again, until that time many years ago when he got into trouble and disappeared. And he also looked on Anselmo, the paralyzed harpist, as one of the family. He had lived with Rosendo ever since he was left an orphan. He played so sweetly at nightfall! Sometimes his old Pascuala would cry as she listened to him. Who knows what longings the music awoke in her heart!

The field of wheat rippled gently, ripe in the evening sun. One stalk is like another, and all together they are pleasant to behold. One man is like another, and all together they, too, are pleasant to behold. Likewise the history of Rosendo Maqui and his children was as the history of each and every one of the other villagers in Rumi. But men have heads and hearts, thought Rosendo, while the wheat lives only through its roots, and that makes the difference between them.

Down below there was a town, and he was its mayor and perhaps a doubtful future awaited them. Yesterday, today . . . The words teemed with years, with centuries.

Old Chauqui had once told a story that had in turn been told to Rosendo. Before, it seems, there was nothing but community. There were no ranches encircling the community on all sides. But then some strangers came who did away with the system of communities and began to divide the land into pieces and to take these pieces for themselves. The Indians had to work for these new masters. Then the poor people—for that is when there began to be poor people in the world—began to ask, "What is wrong with the communities?" The only answer was to make them work till they dropped in their tracks, or not to answer them at all. The few Indians whose lands had not been taken from them decided to keep on with their community system, for work is not meant to make people die or suffer, but to bring them well-being and happiness. This was how the communities like theirs came to be. And besides, old Chauqui had said:

"Unhappily for the Indian, every day there are fewer communities. I have seen many disappear into the hands of the rich. And everything they did was in the name of the law. The law! Rights! What do we know about the law? As soon as a rich man starts talking about rights

that means something crooked is afoot, and if law exists, it is only to do us harm. Please God none of the ranch owners around Rumi thinks of taking to the law! Villagers, shun it like the plague!"

Chauqui was now dust, and barely a memory, but his sayings lived on. Rumi still existed, having received only an occasional lash from the law; but other neighboring communities had disappeared completely. When the villagers walked among the hills, the older ones would tell the younger:

"Over there, on those slopes"—pointing to a spot on the rock-ribbed vastness of the Andes—"was such-and-such a community, and now it's Ranch So-and-So."

Then they cursed a little, loving their land jealously.

Rosendo Maqui had never been able to understand the law clearly. To him it was a kind of shady, criminal sleight-of-hand trick. One day, for no good reason, a poll-tax law was proclaimed by which the Indians, because they were Indians, had to pay a certain amount each year. Somebody by the name of "Castile" had once abolished it, together with the slavery of some poor black-skinned men whom the villagers of Rumi had never seen. But after the war it had been put back again. The villagers and the tenant farmers said:

"It's not our fault that we're Indians. Aren't we men just the same?"

In Rumi the Indian Pillco swore like a mule driver:

"God damn it to hell, we'll have to paint ourselves white!"

But nobody paid any attention to them and they all had to pay. Then one day, for no reason, the devilish law disappeared. There were some people in town who said they had done away with it because a certain Atusparia and a certain Uchcu Pedro, both Indians, at the head of a great band of followers, had started a revolt. The ones who spread the story were clapped in jail. Who knows what really happened? But there were still plenty of laws. The government knows a lot. There were the taxes on salt, on coca, on matches, on corn liquor, on brown sugar. These taxes meant nothing to the rich, but a lot to the poor. There was the price-fixing. And the law of military service was not the same for all. A "battalion on the march" meant a battalion of Indians on the march. Every now and then, at the head of the column, riding

officers' horses and waving shining swords as symbols of their authority there appeared a few men of the wealthy class. These officers were paid. That was the law.

Rosendo despised the law. Which was the law that favored the Indian? The law of compulsory primary education was not enforced. Where was the school in Rumi? Where was it on the neighboring ranches? In the town there was one just for the sake of appearances. He didn't even want to think about it because it made his blood boil. Yet it was his duty to think and talk about it the first chance he got, so the work could go on. Maqui had been authorized by the community to hire a teacher, and after many inquiries he finally got the son of a law clerk from the capital of the province to accept the position at a salary of thirty soles a month. He said to Rosendo:

"You'll need books, slates, pencils, and tablets."

The pencils in the store were very expensive. By making inquiries here and there he finally learned that the School Commissioner was supposed to give them the supplies. He found him in a café having a few drinks.

"Come back such and such a day," the commissioner said grudgingly.

Maqui came back on the day he was told, and the official, after listening to his request with raised eyebrows, informed him that he had no supplies on hand at the moment. He would have to order them from Lima and they would probably not get there before next year. The mayor went to the son of the law clerk to tell him what he had learned, and the young fellow answered him:

"So you were in earnest about the school. I thought you were joking. I'm not going to scuffle with wooden-headed Indians for less than fifty soles."

Maqui told him he would have to let him know, for he had reported that the salary agreed on was thirty soles. Time went by. The supplies did not arrive the following year. Only then did the commissioner tell him that he would have to send in an application stating the number of pupils and other things. He also said, at this late date, that the community would have to put up a special building. And he didn't want any nonsense about it, either. The tenacious mayor agreed to everything. He counted the children, and found there were more than a hundred; then he went to a lawyer to have him draw up the petition. It cost him five soles and it was finally sent off. At the same time he

got the community to authorize the salary of fifty soles a month to the teacher and he called on several of the villagers, among them those who were the best masons, to build the special house. They began to mix the mud and shape the abodes with hearty enthusiasm.

That was how things stood at the moment. Perhaps there would be a school. If only the supplies came through and the teacher didn't change his mind again. It would be a good thing for the children to know how to read and write and they had told him there were four important rules. Rosendo—how could he help it?—had to count by twos, using his fingers if the amount was not very much and pebbles or grains of corn if it was more, and even so he sometimes got all mixed up with the division and subtraction. It was good to know things. Once he went into a store in the town at the very moment the subprefect, the judge, and some other gentlemen were there talking. He bought a machete and was just going out when they started speaking about the Indians, and so he pretended something had happened to the strap of his sandal. He sat down on the doorstep, as though he were fixing it. Behind him he could hear them saying:

"Did you ever hear such nonsense? I've just seen it in today's paper ... These Indians ... What's all the excitement? ... They're talking in Congress about abolishing compulsory labor and they're even talking about a minimum-wage law ... Some new congressman trying to make a name for himself ... That's what I think, it will never be more than a proposal ... Nevertheless; they're straws that show the way the wind blows. It wouldn't take much to make these"—pointing to the absent-minded, absorbed Maqui—"start claiming their rights and getting ugly."

"Don't you believe it. You see what is happening to the native communities, even though their rights are more or less acknowledged ... My grandmother used to say 'It's one thing to rope a horse and another to ride him.'" There was loud approving laughter.

"Nevertheless," it was the cautious voice again, "these are advances ... We ought to be grateful that these"—pointing to the indifferent one again—"don't know how to read and never find out anything. Otherwise, you'd soon see ..."

"In that case," spoke the subprefect, "we'd have to use a firm hand, my friends."

There was a whispering followed by a meaningful silence and then Rosendo heard heavy footsteps behind him. Somebody tapped him on

the shoulder with a cane making him turn around. He saw the subprefect who said in an overbearing tone:

"What are you doing there, pretending to be asleep? That's no place to sit."

Rosendo Maqui fastened on the sandal he had been fixing and went slowly up the street. Now there was an example of what was going on, he thought, and the Indians so ignorant they knew nothing about it. Stubborn mules! When little girls were clumsy with the spindle and could not spin a smooth thread from their wool, their mothers beat their hands with thistle switches until they bled. The miraculous plant worked wonders! It turned them into excellent spinners. Rosendo grinned broadly: that's what they should do to the students. A good thwack on the head, and let's go right on reading, writing, and counting. Naturally, one whack wouldn't be enough, it would take a lot of them. He had a thick bundle of papers which bore witness to the community's legal existence. He would roll them up into a kind of club. "Line up, villagers, now you're going to get an education." Thump, thump, thump, thump, and there they were all educated.

Rosendo Maqui stopped smiling. He didn't have the papers in his possession at the moment. Don Alvaro Amenabar y Roldan —all that string of names—had filed suit against the community before the Court of First Resort of the Province, questioning the boundaries and demanding that the community present its title deeds. So Rosendo Maqui had taken the deeds, and had appointed, as agent and defender of the rights of the Community of Rumi, a self-made lawyer who rejoiced in the unusual name of Bismarck Ruiz. He was a pudgy little man with a red nose, who called himself "juridical defender." Rosendo had found him sitting at a table heaped with papers, holding a dish of stewed meat and a bottle of corn liquor. After examining the deeds Bismarck Ruiz said:

"I'll incorporate them into the brief. This will hold that Amenabar for a while"—Rosendo liked the aggressive tone with which he spoke of the rancher—"and if he still wants to keep on, the trial can last a hundred years and then he'll lose and have to pay the costs."

Then Bismarck Ruiz had told him how many cases he had won, and assured him that the suit against the community would be over as soon as it started, that is to say, as soon as they presented the deeds; and he charged him forty soles. Babbling like a brook he had failed to notice how ill-advised had been the mention of those hundred years. Rosendo thought about it many times.

Now, wrapped in the fragile brightness of late afternoon, the gnawing presentiment of ill-luck set a vague pain bubbling in his breast again. Nevertheless, the growing and rustling ripeness of the wheat and the might that emanated from the earth were a hymn to life. Rosendo Maqui held fast to the truth of the earth, and it was easy for him to think that nothing bad would happen. The law was a plague, but Rumi had withstood other plagues. It had done it with those that came in the form of sickness. True, they had carried off many villagers, and the work of digging graves had been steady and the weeping of the women had been heart-breaking; but those who got up from bed or weathered the storm began life again with renewed strength. As time went by the memory of the death toll became like a vague nightmare. Sad and far-off days!

Three times in his own lifetime Maqui had seen smallpox come, do its devastating work, and depart. Those who had it the first time consoled themselves with the thought that they would never get it again. Oh, the doctors! Among other cases, there was that of a beautiful girl who had smallpox three times. Her face was so pitted that her real name was lost and she was known only by her nickname "Honeycomb." She railed bitterly at Fate and said she would rather have died. Then Fate sent typhus to the village. Twice it smote more fiercely than the smallpox. The villagers died, one after the other, and the living, burning with the raging fever, had hardly strength enough to bury them. Nobody even thought of sitting at night with the dead. With a great effort they carried the dead to the graveyard as quickly as they could to keep the disease from spreading. The Indian Pillco, always grumbling and standing up for his rights, complained about what had not yet happened:

"Who's going to bury the ones that die last?" he growled. "It would be better to die right away and not be left lying around."

And he did die, but Fate probably did not do that to please him but because it was tired of his impudence.

There were odd cases during the typhus epidemic. But the strangest one was the man who came back to life. An Indian who had been sick for many days suddenly began to gasp, then lost consciousness and

died. He got as stiff as a dead person can get. Naturally, his wife cried. The gravediggers came, wrapped him in his blankets, put him on a stretcher, and carried him to the cemetery. They hadn't dug down more than three feet when a fierce storm began. With the lightning flashing around them and gusts of water lashing them, they thrust the corpse in the ground, threw a few shovelfuls of dirt over it, and left, planning to return the next day and bury it properly. They didn't get a chance to.

About midnight the widow, who was asleep with her two little children, heard a knocking on the door. A hollow, doleful voice called her by her name:

"Micaela, Micaela, open the door."

In spite of everything the woman recognized the voice and she almost fainted. She thought it was the dead man in torment. She began to pray out loud and the children woke up and started to cry. The anguished plea went on outside:

"Micaela, it's me, it's me, open up."

Of course she knew who it was: the dead man. Two women who were sitting up with a sick man in a near-by house came out when they heard the noise.

"Who's there?" asked one of them.

"It's me," answered the dead man.

The women fell into a panic and began to run and didn't stop until they reached Rosendo's house. They woke him up and told him that the man who had died that afternoon was in torment and had come to get his wife. They had seen and heard him. There he was, in his underclothes, calling poor Micaela and trying to get into his house. Maqui, who on this occasion was mayor of the living and the dead, assuming his fullest authority, went to see what was going on. The women kept at a safe distance behind him. Would he try to persuade the dead man to go back to the graveyard and not take anybody with him? As they came nearer they could hear the living corpse crying out:

"Micaela, open up."

But Micaela had stopped praying and was screaming:

"Help, help."

As soon as he saw the mayor the outcast came toward him:

"Rosendo, taita Rosendo, tell my wife I'm not dead, I'm alive."

There was, undoubtedly, a sound of the other world in his voice. Rosendo put his hands on his shoulders, and even in the darkness he could take in the tragic expression of the face distorted by suffering. He quieted him a little and the man told his story. He had come to, and felt chilled to the bone. He stretched out his arms and touched mud, and it was on his face, too. Terrified, he felt around on all sides, and a strong smell of death came to him, as though there were a corpse beside him. He was in a grave. He jumped up in one terrified bound and climbed out. All around him were wooden crosses, and a little farther off the stone wall of the graveyard. His screech of fright died in his throat, and he ran away as fast as he could go, but once he got outside the cemetery his weakened legs could carry him no farther and he fell down. From the ground where he lay he could see the pointed roofs and leafy trees of the village rising out of the mass of shadows, and then the sky, the clear sky that follows a storm, twinkling with a few bright stars. At this point he reached the conviction that he was alive, and, what was more, that he was going to live. With a great effort he managed to get to his feet and, with slow and faltering step, reach his house. That was all.

The mayor put his arm around his waist, and having given the frightened wife time to calm down a little he led him to the door. There the mayor himself called to the woman, who lighted a candle and fearfully opened the heavy walnut door. Micaela was very pale and the tallow candle shook in her hand. The children looked on with eyes as big as saucers. The man walked in and, without a word, lay down on one of the two beds in the room. He seemed to be restraining himself. Perhaps he wanted to talk or cry. His wife covered him over with blankets and the mayor sat down by the head of the bed. Meantime, the two women who had called Rosendo had gone home and then returned with a drink of brandy and other things. The man drank greedily. Rosendo Maqui patted him affectionately on the shoulder, saying to him:

"Now relax and go to sleep. These are sufferings we have to bear."

His wife spread her tenderness like a blanket over his feet. Little by little the harassed man grew calmer, and finally he fell into a sound sleep. He did not die. He got over the typhus but not the grave. The

darkness of night set his nerves aquiver, and he feared sleep like death. But when harvesttime came around, and life held out handfuls of good things, he got well of the grave, too, and lived as before. But only for a short time. The plague had carried off many of the reapers, and those who were left had to work very hard. He spurred on his companions:

"Gather in the harvest, gather in the harvest, we have to live."

And his eyes sparkled with happiness.

But his heart had been weakened by the sickness, and one day it stopped. The man fell crushed under the heavy sack of grain he was carrying. This time he died for good. Rosendo Maqui tried to recall his name, which flitted just beyond his reach like a firefly in the night. He did recall that his two children grew up and were big enough to work when the Blues came along and carried them off. But that was another plague.

For a long time there had been talk about a war with a person named Chile. People said Chile had won, but then he had gone away and nobody heard any more about him. The villagers didn't see the war, because it never came their way. Once they did hear that a General Caceres, a very important officer, had passed close by with his men. They also heard that he had met up with Chile on the plain of Huamachuco, had fought a fierce battle, and had lost. Years ago, one clear morning, Rosendo Maqui had managed to make out, far away, almost lost on the horizon, a mass of snow which they said was Huaillilas. In that direction lay Huamachuco. Far, far away. The villagers had believed that Chile was a general until the damned Blues came. Their captain heard them talking once about General Chile, and he growled at them:

"You ignorant fools, Chile is a country and the people there are the Chileans, just the same as Peru is a country and we are Peruvians. You Indians are as dumb as animals."

The animals were the soldiers, and hungry soldiers, too. They had no more than got there than the captain of the Blues had said to him:

"The quota of the village of Rumi is one cow or ten sheep a day, and whatever grain we need."

The devils. Some were called Blues because they wore a strip of blue cloth around the crown of their hat, or on their arm, and others were called Reds because they wore a red strip. The Blues were fighting for somebody by the name of Iglesias, and the Reds were fighting for somebody by the name of Caceres. All of a sudden one town would organize a group of Blues and another a group of Reds. Or there might be both groups in the same town. So they lay in ambush waiting to kill one another. And they descended on the villages and communities like a hailstorm on a sprouting field. Long live Caceres! Hooray for Iglesias! That was fine for them. Groups of fifty, a hundred, or two hundred men, commanded by a captain or a major or a colonel. They got to Rumi, too. The officer in charge was an unpleasant-looking and worse-tempered white man called Major Tellez. But if his orderly, Silvino Castro, alias Coca Wad, had been in command he would have been a hundred times worse. He was a big half-breed whose jaw always bulged with a great wad of coca. But the real reason for the nickname was because the wad of coca had once saved his life.

Once during an election Castro was the official gang leader of one of the candidates. As he turned a corner he suddenly found himself face to face with his counterpart on the opposite side. The tough pulled out a revolver and fired two shots at Castro at close range, and left him there in the street for dead, his face streaming blood. But the half-breed, to his own great surprise, could get up. He put his hand to his face and saw that it was covered with blood. His mouth was full of the warm salty taste of blood, and he spat it out with his wad of coca. Something fell out of the coca, and when he examined it he saw that it was the bullet. After it had pierced his cheek it lodged in the thick green wad. The second shot had gone wild. To make the story still more impressive, Castro would add that he had no teeth on that side of his mouth and the shot would have gone into the roof of his mouth, killing him. Major Tellez said that business about the teeth was not true, for, using his authority, he had once made Castro open his mouth, and there was not a tooth missing, and only one had a little cavity. Then great arguments would begin about the efficacy of shots at close range. One of the men said that, even if he hadn't had the wad of coca in his mouth, all the shot would have done was break a few teeth. Castro insisted that he had no teeth on that side of his mouth. And he added that if his adversary was so sure of what he was saying, why didn't he let him fire a shot at him and see what happened. To which Major Tellez replied that they were to save their shots for the Reds.

The idea of a man being saved by a wad of coca made a good story and at first it was accepted. But unfortunately for Castro, who was proud of the exploit, the prominent scar on his cheek brought the matter to mind frequently, and the doubts and discussions. In these and the discussion of similar problems the patriotic Blues employed their time. Of course, they were fighting for Iglesias and the salvation of their country. There was not one who did not think he was fitted to be minister or at least prefect. The worst of it was that they didn't seem to have any intention of leaving. Did they think the government was in Rumi? Silvino Castro was always getting drunk and then he would go around shooting up the village. He would aim at the chickens, boasting that he could hit them right in the head. And though his aim was not always as accurate as that, he did kill them every time. The girls watched the soldiers with frightened eyes. One day Chabela, the prettiest girl in the whole village, came crying to her mother to tell her that Coca Wad had violated her behind the fence of the cornfield. The shades of night were often shaken by the screams of other virgins. And morning after morning the sky dawned blue, as though it were offering these brutes the strips they tied to their hats and sleeves.

One day Coca Wad lined up all the young men of the village and picked out the strongest of them for orderlies. They were to look after the officers' horses. Rosendo Maqui went to Major Tellez to plead for them, but Coca Wad cut him short:

"Get out of here, you stupid Indian, before I kill you for your lack of patriotism." Then he tried to hit Rosendo, and Major Tellez either could not or would not help him.

But things changed on the happy yet calamitous day when the Reds came storming into town, some on horseback, some on foot. "Long live Caceres." They had red like blood on their hats and sleeves. The Blues yelled and encouraged each other with shouts:

"We must defend the stronghold," said Major Tellez.

"Let us defend it," bellowed Coca Wad.

Rosendo Maqui thought to himself, "What stronghold?" and wished they would all go there and get killed. The Reds advanced amidst smoke and gunfire. A Blue began to ring the church bell. Tellez and Coca Wad divided their followers. One group was to get into the attics and shoot through the skylights. The others were to barricade themselves behind the stone fences. A few, the bravest, were to get

into the trees. All this took place on the side of the village next to the road along which the Reds were coming.

"Long live Caceres! Death to the traitors!"

"Long live Iglesias! Long live the Fatherland!"

Why were they talking like that? They probably knew their own business. A thick hail of bullets received the riders when they got within range. Some fell face downward on the ground; others managed to dismount. The latter scurried for shelter behind rocks or hills, and began a steady fire. The infantry had come up by this time, and began to close in on the flanks, firing all the time. Some of the Blues dropped out of the trees; others were silenced behind the stone walls. A group of Reds got to the church and took it by stabbing in the back two Blues who were watching the road. Then Coca Wad, who had been up in an elder tree, realized that they were going to be surrounded, and gave the order to retreat. No denying he was brave, for he stayed there with ten men until all the others had retired, shooting anyone who tried to approach them. Tellez and the main body of the Blues, who were now partly red with blood, ran to take refuge behind a hill where they waited for the orderlies to bring up the horses. Coca Wad and his ten men joined them, and not a moment too soon, for the Reds had mounted and were galloping toward them waving their swords. But the road ran through a narrow defile, and the pursuit was not very successful, for they brought back only two prisoners.

Rosendo Maqui saw the whole thing from a spot not far from where he was now sitting. As soon as he had seen the Reds approaching in the distance he had said to himself, "Just what am I doing here?" and he climbed up the side of the hill to a clump of bushes from which he could watch and not be seen. The other villagers, except the orderlies, hid in their houses.

When Maqui came down a smell of blood and gunpowder hung over the village. Micaela, the widow of the man who had come back to life, was screaming, like the mothers of the other boys:

"My sons, my sons, where are my sons?"

Just then the two riders came up with their prisoners. They said that when Major Tellez saw that they had extra horses because of the men who had been killed, he ordered all those who were with him to mount, and left only five horses for Coca Wad and his men. That was

why there weren't horses enough for the last ones, and two were taken prisoners. The mothers swore and cried and begged Captain Portal, the leader of the Reds, to shoot the prisoners and all the wounded Blues who were being brought up then by Indians and soldiers in hand seats and on the stretcher they used at funerals. The wounded made no outcry, and they and the prisoners watched the enemy commander with sad, intent eyes. The mothers kept screaming:

"Shoot them, shoot them!"

The wounded had been put down on the ground, and the blood of one of them was making a puddle in a little hollow.

Portal lighted a cigarette. The Indians crowded around him in a dense mass. Micaela screamed at the commander, who looked on indifferently, and she threw herself on one of the wounded like an enraged puma, her curved nails revealing her intention of tearing out his throat. Two soldiers held her back, but she threw herself face down over the puddle of blood and began to drink it, panting like an animal. When they pulled her back her face was smeared with blood, and she gave one hair-raising shriek before she fell over in a faint.

God only knows what effect this had on Captain Portal, who was known to be implacable toward his enemies, for, instead of having them shot, he said:

"Open up the church and put all the wounded in there. There are bandages and disinfectant in the supplies. Just put a guard over the two prisoners." Then he said to his orderly:

"Bring me a good stiff drink of brandy."

Later on the villagers gathered up the dead, twenty-five in all, and took them to the graveyard. Portal's orders were:

"Bury them together. When everything is said and done, they are all Peruvians and it is a good thing for them to be united, even in death." The villagers dug a long deep ditch. The captain and Maqui went to the burying, and as they were putting in the corpses of the Reds, Portal made his comments:

"That little half-breed was a devil. When he joined up he had nothing but an iron bar and he got himself a rifle in a fight . . . That tall fellow certainly liked the girls . . . I'm sorry that one's dead. His name was Rosas, and he told the best jokes."

As he looked at the bodies of the Blues, he said:

"A fine-looking fellow. Good type of soldier . . . What a shot! Drilled him right through the forehead. I wonder which of my men did it. He deserves a reward."

Rosendo Maqui politely nodded his head in agreement, and thought how lucky the prisoners and the wounded were to be alive. When he came back he had the spots of blood cleaned off the ground, for, after all, it was the blood of human beings, the sign of their life, and it wasn't right to trample on it. Then he made his way to the church where he found that the spirit of brotherhood was not limited to the dead Peruvians, but included the wounded too. For the moment, at least, they had forgotten that they were Blues and Reds. There they lay in two rows on the floor, wrapped in striped blankets and the shadow of the church. The less seriously wounded talked together and smoked cigarettes they shared with one another. The others lay motionless, some with their heads white with bandages, looking at the ceiling, or at the image on the main altar. Some groaned dully through closed lips.

In front of the altar an Indian was lighting candles which the devout among the wounded had asked to have put there. The blessed image of Saint Isidore, the patron saint of farmers, stood there in a niche. He wore a Spanish cape and a Panama hat with a band of the national colors around the crown. Under the cape he wore full pants tucked into shiny boots. His left hand rested quietly on his breast, and in his right hand he carried a spade. With his mustache and chin whiskers, his rosy cheeks and bright eyes, Saint Isidore had the satisfied air of a prosperous farmer after a good season.

Some of the other soldiers came in to light a candle and inquired for the image of Saint George. The wounded had asked the same question, and, on being told that there was none, had placed their candles before Saint Isidore. On the side walls of the church, bright as day with their whitewash, were colored pictures of scenes from the Passion of the Lord. The soldiers would have preferred Saint George, that most perfect of warriors. Other saints who were men of arms fought with men, but Saint George had challenged a fierce dragon, had fought with him, and had run him through with his lance. One of the soldiers took out a picture of the saint of his devotion and leaned it against the tip of Saint Isidore's boots, so that it would receive there the homage of the lighted candles. It was a handsome Saint George with a piercing gaze and a resolute air, riding a splendid white horse, and charging with his sharp lance a huge beast that had the head of a

crocodile, the claws of a lion, the wings of a bat, and the tail of a snake, and was breathing flames from its mouth. To tell the truth Rosendo did not care much for this, because he could think of no better saint than one who tilled the earth, and besides he doubted if there had even been such an animal.

Several Indian women came in, among them Chabela; they placed their candles on the altar and knelt to pray in a sad tone. At the foot of the altar, writhing like worms in the darkness, the wounded groaned or talked or slept a restless sleep.

When Rosendo left the church he learned that Micaela was still beside herself and had become crazy. It was hard for him to keep the tears back when he saw her. Her eyes stared vacantly out of her head and she kept up a continuous moaning. As she sat there with her lower jaw hanging open and her arms limp at her side she looked like an exhausted or dying animal.

Those were unsettled days. The Reds stayed in Rumi a week, eating as many sheep and cows as the Blues. When they went away they left four of their wounded behind. Of these, three left once they were cured, and one, who looked as though he might be an Indian, stayed on in the community, for he had grown friendly with a widow.

Saint Isidore forgave them their bad manners and healed them all. Poor Micaela was the real victim, for she never recovered her senses. She got a little better and stopped her moaning, but she wandered about the village like an idiot, saying to everybody she met:

"They're coming back. They'll be back any day now."

Finally she died and the villagers said:

"Poor crazy thing, she's better off dead."

But it was not only wounded, calamities, and disagreeable memories that the soldiers left behind in Rumi. They left off-spring too. Nature was stronger than the girls' protests, and in due time they bore the children of strangers. They were called Benito Castro, Remigio Collantes, and Serapio Vargas. Their fathers, gone for good, perhaps killed in the civil wars, would never see them. There was one case that only Rosendo knew about. An Indian, who had been away from the community while the soldiers were there, found his wife pregnant

when he got back. He went to consult Maqui, who said to him:

"This has happened through no fault of hers, and you should not repudiate nor humiliate the poor woman. The child ought to bear your name." And so it was. In the case of the single girls matters were more complicated. The young men did not want to marry them. Maqui said over and over:

"This attitude is unjust. It is not their fault."

But one by one they finally got married off.

Benito's stepfather disliked him and he treated him harshly and punished him unjustly—the heart of man is a pool of darkness—until Rosendo took the boy to live with him. He and Pascuala treated him as though he were one of their own, and Benito grew up calling them father and mother. But his blood was strong in his veins. As a little fellow he became famous for his use of the sling. At a distance of two blocks he could manage to hit the church bell, which was quite funny because Maqui, to save time, used to call the selectmen by ringing the church bell. He had designated a certain number of rings for each man. Suddenly a stone would hit the bell, giving the signal agreed upon, and one of the selectmen would appear. When he found out what had happened he would start out brandishing his stick, but Benito would run away through the fields.

On moonlit nights the children would gather in the square to play. The moon sailed across the sky with unruffled majesty and the children would shout gayly as they watched the great marvelous disk of light:

Moon, moooon

Give me a boon!

Moon, moooon,

Give me fortune!

They thought the moon could give them things. The older ones told the little ones to look closely, and on the face of the moon they would see a donkey carrying a woman. Some said it was the Virgin with the infant Jesus in her arms, and others said it was just a weaver.

Moon, moooon,

Give me a boon!

In the midst of their fun, Benito Castro, who was hidden somewhere in a corner, would suddenly rush out at full speed bellowing like a bull or roaring like a mountain lion. The children would scatter in all directions, skirts and ponchos flying, and he would catch one of them and shake him as though he were going to tear him to pieces. Then he would jump around shouting comically:

Moon, moooon,

Give me fortune!

These memories warmed Rosendo's heart. Where would Benito be now? Would he still be alive? He hoped that he was still living, he believed he was, with the fervor that comes from affection. His old wife always said that any day he would come back, happy and strong, as though nothing had happened. She often recalled her Benito, saying that he was the child she had shed the most tears over. Perhaps that was why she loved him so much, with that deep tenderness mothers feel toward the difficult child or headstrong youth whose disposition is going to make his life a hard struggle.

Maqui did not even want to think about how Benito had got into trouble, and still less how he, the upright mayor, had once betrayed justice. Nobody could reproach him, but he reproached himself, or, to be more exact, he felt uncomfortable when he thought about it.

Dusk was slowly falling. The wheat field was a rippling lake of dark waters, and in the hollow the village had disappeared as though swallowed by an abyss. But a light sprang up, then another and another. The red flames of the village hearths flickered cheerfully in the night. Overhead the sky had hardened into a dark stone, while on the ridges of the hills the twilight gleam was fading away. Maqui knew there would be no moon tonight. He thought of it as asleep, far away in a distant land of shadow, never to come again to bring pleasure to men and delight to children. Lord, what a fool he was becoming. He knew it would be back next week to lift him out of the shadows, out of this thick darkness that seemed to sink into his very bones. The little village houses beckoned to him with their flickering lights. From the chapel there came a faint glimmer. Some devout soul had lighted candles on the altar.

A great worker of miracles is Saint Isidore the Laborer. The image at Rumi has its history, an old history rooted in time as firmly as the faith of its believers. There are stories of its astounding exploits. Long, long ago they were going to build a town in a place not far from Rumi, but the people were of two opinions. One, the more numerous, wanted to build the town in a valley of cherimoya fruit trees, and the other, in the meadows on a hillside. The majority won out and the building of the town began in the valley. But Saint Isidore, who had been chosen the patron saint, had ideas of his own. Nobody knew how he had got there, but one fine morning he appeared on the summit of the hill where the minority had wanted to build the town. He had moved, so to speak, between midnight and cockcrow. The determined partisans of the valley carried the image back to the place it had first been assigned. But Saint Isidore was not a saint who gave up so easily. In the morning there he was on the hill again, basking in the rays of the rising sun. The stubborn majority took him back once more. And for the third time Saint Isidore made his gigantic nocturnal leap. At this all parties concluded that here was no joking matter, and they decided to build the town on the side of the hill. The town received the name of Saint Isidore-on-the-Hill, and the abrupt lay of the land made it necessary for the houses to be built almost on top of one another; the people had to climb the streets on all fours or balance themselves like tightrope walkers. They were nicknamed goats, because of this animal's fondness for climbing to the most out-of-the-way places. The town was surrounded by fine pastures and the herds thrived and multiplied. The "goats" had many cows, sheep, and horses. They lived happily and the years passed lightly.

But whether because they failed to celebrate his feast day properly, or because they gave him some other cause for annoyance, Saint Isidore sent an earthquake which left no stone or adobe standing in the town, except those of the church, which was untouched. Nearly all the inhabitants were killed, and the survivors racked their brains trying to discover the saint's designs. Some said he had become angry because they were paying too much attention to stock raising and he was a farmer by profession. Others thought perhaps his annual feast had been poor, and there were those who deplored the increase in illicit relations and the falling-off of marriages. The wisest believed that this was sheer nonsense, for the facts were as plain as a pikestaff. The destruction of all the town except the church was the plain expression by Saint Isidore of his wish to have everybody clear out and leave him alone. And this interpreter added that, in his opinion, the sensible

thing was to go, because, as they knew, the saint would brook no contradiction. Anyway, if they hadn't understood him he would make himself clear. So determined a patron saint inspired such awe in the hill dwellers that they actually left and built themselves another town in the valley. Since then only a pile of ruins surrounds the chapel, and the only prayer heard there is the voice of the thunder on stormy nights.

Thereupon the villagers of Rumi decided to adopt him. Missionaries and monks had taught them the benefits of prayer and they went in a procession to move the saint to the community. Saint Isidore benevolently allowed them to. Bearing in mind his habit of changing places at night they decided not to build him a church until they had kept him under observation for a fortnight. Each morning found Saint Isidore in the same place—beside a grove of alders, according to tradition—indicating his desire to remain. They therefore built him the sturdy chapel. It had no towers and the bell hung from a thick beam that rested on the bare side walls of the narrow porch. In the front wall, as bare as the others, a thick, rudely carved door of God knows what kind of wood creaked on its hinges, and is there now if it has not already crumbled to dust.

The church bell had a clear, full, vibrant voice. It could be heard for miles around as it echoed through the hills. It had its history, too, or rather, its legend, for nobody, not even tradition, could fully substantiate it. To be sure, it could be said that it was made by a famous caster of bells, Sancho Ximenez de la Cueva, in the year 1780, for that was engraved on the bronze. But nobody could tell how it was made. According to tradition, the caster used unholy arts to give his bells their incomparable tone. Since he did not charge enough for the bells to have mixed gold in the blend of metals, it was believed that he used human blood, kidnaping his victims and cutting their throats, just as the bronze came to a boil, so that the blood would add the note of the human voice to the enduring hardness of the metal.

In Rumi the faithful had been called to worship by the sound of drum and ratchet until a rich man of the neighborhood, who had gone to Lima as a congressman and had lost his faith, put up for sale the famous bell of the church on his ranch. The villagers of Rumi bought it for a hundred soles, and from then on the loud clear voice of the bell, fraught with years and mystery, was a source of great pride to them. There was none other like it in the whole neighborhood. It sang and laughed gayly in the festivals. It groaned as it tolled for the death of a villager, with sincere, compassionate grief. When it rang out all its changes on the eve of a feast, the sound traveled from hill to hill

inviting the hands on far-off ranches. And on the feast day, as it called to mass or accompanied the procession, it sang so loudly and clearly of the glory of Saint Isidore that the hills joyously agreed and the hearts of the celebrants became another bell. Saint Isidore was satisfied and showered his blessings on Rumi as wheat is scattered on the plowed field; for he had this bell, many candles on his altar, a fine festival, and the devotion of all the community.

On the great days of the feast there was a procession. The platform on which his image was borne was covered with fruits.

Saint Isidore looked like the captain of a heavy-laden barge moving down the multicolored river of his close-packed worshipers. The riverbed was the village street. The comparison would have been exact if it had not been that the procession was headed by a team of oxen driven by a living Saint Isidore. Their horns were twined with flowers and the youth who guided the plough wore a cape and a hat just like the saint's. This symbolic ploughman, skilled in the use of goad and plough, left behind him a furrow that was proof of the celestial farmer's abilities. During the remaining days of the festival the saint, from the portal of the church, viewed the rejoicing of his people. They ate and they drank and they danced day and night. Special bands of minstrels, glittering with little mirrors sewed on their clothes, sang verses alluding to the saint as they danced:

Saint Isidore,

Laborer,

Turns up the sod With energy;

Saint Isidore,

Sower,

Turns to fruit

Each flower.

It was a delight. There were plenty who played the flute and drum, and for years now Anselmo was always there with his harp. He played and played, bent over his instrument, really drunk with emotion and his own trills. To be sure at times there had been droughts and a famine that lasted two years, but all this was lost in time which held no dawn for Rosendo but only the pale stars of memory. The priest, Father Gervasio Mestas, officiated at the festival and he knew how to

pray to Saint Isidore in proper fashion. And the friars who came through the village blessed the flocks so they would multiply and grow thick wool. But one had to be careful not to be taken in by false friars. Because once two men dressed like monks passed through Rumi as they traveled about the hill country asking alms for their convent in Cajamarca. The lay brothers who accompanied them were driving along a great herd of sheep and cows, the donations of ranchers, farmers, and the communities. They blessed the herds of the givers with great solemnity, using words nobody understood, and making many signs of the cross. And it happened that while they were in the district of Sartin, driving a herd so big it was like a roundup, a university scholar who really did know Latin and theology chanced to pass that way. He spoke to them, and the make-believe friars stood there rooted to the ground, confounded by his questioning and knowledge. That wasn't the end of the matter, though. The people rose up in anger, and the impostors had to strip off their clumsy robes and run as fast as their legs could carry them. The news spread quickly from one side to the other, but there were certain places it didn't reach. Maqui happened to be over in Callari, selling potatoes, and he stopped at the house of a farmer who told him happily how well he was getting along. He was especially pleased at the way his sheep multiplied and he attributed it to the blessing of the two friars. The farmer's eyes nearly popped out of his head when Maqui told him that they were the two thieves dressed up as friars who had been unmasked in Sartin.

In Callari itself, the village that gave its name to the district, not one human being remained. There were only the ruins of a town. It was sad to think that there was nothing but destruction and silence where men and women had once worked, suffered, and rejoiced, innocently awaiting the joys and trials of each new day. Not one was left. It is said they had been wiped out by the plague. Legend says it was the basilisk, that baleful creature resembling a lizard that kills with a single glance. But if a person sees it first, then it dies. The devilish thing went to Callari, hid under the doorstep of the church, and in a single Sunday, as the people came out of mass, killed off the whole town with its brilliant, fatal eyes.

Maqui looked sadly down on his village. The fires were burning brightly and their ruddy gleam lightened the desolation of the darkness which had taken possession of heaven and earth, extinguishing the flames of twilight that had lingered on the hilltops.

Just like this the dwellers of Callari had lighted their hearth fires and then had gone to sleep, to awaken and repeat the days and the nights and the days, on through time. Until that morning when Benito Castro was chasing a wild yearling that had got away from him into the brush of the ravine. And what did he find there? Nothing more nor less than a corpse, the fresh corpse of a woman. He put her over his shoulder, carried her to the door of the church, and called the mayor. Rosendo examined her and could find no wound or sign of violence. He rang the bell and the villagers assembled. The dead woman was young, well-built, and pretty, and wore an orange-colored skirt, a white blouse embroidered in red, and a black shawl. Nobody knew her, nobody had ever seen her. They sat up with the corpse and, after the judge of the district had come and signed the death certificate, they buried her. The villagers who traveled around reported the death wherever they went, asking:

"Do you know of a woman who has disappeared who looked like this and wore such-and-such clothes?"

The news spread through the whole region. Nobody knew anything about it and all thought it very queer. Where had this woman come from? Had she run away? Why had she gone into the underbrush? Had she taken poison? She could have done that miles away without bothering to travel so far. Benito had found her beside the stream in the bottom of the ravine, lying there as though she were just resting.

Now Maqui's thoughts turned to Benito again. He kept coming back to his mind. Perhaps the snake had traced its fatal omen over that brave life. Perhaps ... His jaw was broad, an unruly mustache covered his full upper lip, and his black eyes shone with the frank boldness of an animal raised in the open. He had a thick chest, strong legs, and powerful hands. He was a horsebreaker and a herder. Where would he be now? He was the one who saved the cow Limona from the condors when she was a new-born calf. He got there just as two of the huge black birds were about to light on the defenseless animal, which was so terrified she could not get to her feet. Whipping out his machete Benito had galloped at full speed toward the condors and frightened them away. Limona grew and bore many calves. To look at her, so fat and gentle, her heavy udders full of milk, nobody would ever think there was such a dramatic episode in her past. She was a good milker and her only rival was black Güenachina. She gave a bucketful. But for calves there was none like Añera. She had one every year and that

was how she got her name.

The cows did well. Inocencio said it was because he had buried a little stone calf in the barn lot. He bought it at the county seat, and he knew just where he had put it. He always poured a little milk on the place and sometimes he put a cake on it. And the little statue looked after the calves. This sameInocencio said that the milk of black cows was richer than that of cows of other colors. The wisewoman, Nasha Suro, recommended rinsing the mouth with the urine of a black bull for toothache. But nobody paid any attention to her any more—"oh, ungrateful Indians"—and preferred to go to the blacksmith, Evaristo, who had a special pair of forceps. With one jerk he pulled out the aching tooth, but at times he also took away a piece of the jawbone.

The black bull Mosco had fallen down the hill and killed himself years ago. As he hit against the rocky hillside, he broke a leg, knocked out one eye, and lacerated his flesh. He probably couldn't see where he was going or his strength was gone, for he was very old. He was gentle and used to be very strong. Maqui had gelded him and broken him to the plow. There was not another worker like him. With his teammate, whom he punished if he tried to shirk, he would plow deep, straight furrows. He moved along gently, placidly, reproducing the landscape in his large, expressionless eyes, ruminating his cud and his philosophies. The goad never pierced his smooth, powerful flanks. It had barely to touch them to indicate which way to go and when to turn.

When an ox would not work well with his teammates, they would hitch him up with Mosco. Then he learned the law quickly. Mosco went ahead if the other lagged, and stopped if the other wanted to go too fast. In the latter case he was helped by the ploughman, who would sink the ploughshare its full depth into the ground. His powerful neck, firm haunches, and broad hoofs set the pace for the measured speed and the strong, steady pull that make work efficient. When his work was done he loved soberly and made his way back to the stables. If the pasture was dry he would eat leaves, and if he couldn't get leaves, cactus. When the oval leaves of the cactus were too high for him to reach he would knock over the whole plant.

Maqui loved him. Once one of the villagers hitched him up to a heavy plow, and to show off his strength and speed, pricked him with the goad until he drew blood. Maqui went up to the man and knocked him down with one blow on the head. This was one of the rare occasions on which Rosendo used force with those he governed. After planting, the work animals were turned out to pasture. And at the

general roundups they were brought in to give them salt. But Mosco, every once in a while, decided he wanted salt; and he would jump ditches, fences, and stone walls with calm decision, come to the village, and stop in front of Rosendo's house. The villagers thought it was a great joke:

"Even the bull knows that Rosendo is the mayor."

Maqui would bring him out a big lump of rock salt. After Mosco had licked it as long as he wanted to, he would walk slowly back to pasture. He behaved like a kind, intelligent human being. It saddened the old man to recall the sight of the bloody flesh, the broken horn, and the empty eye socket. He wept, wept over the dead body of this good working companion, this animal of God and the earth.

There had been other exceptional bulls too. There was or had been Barroso, who could drag heavy logs of eucalyptus; Cholito, who fattened easily, and was always glossy and full of life; Madrino, strong and patient, who towed out the stubborn or wild cattle who wouldn't leave the pasture by a thick rope tied from one set of horns to the other. But none of them, none of them, could compare with Mosco in the potency of his strength, the keenness of his intelligence, and the peace of his heart. He was beautiful, too, large, and as black as newly mined coal. Sometimes at the roundups, when the villagers got to the pastures early, they couldn't find Mosco, who was hidden by the lingering shadows in the canebrakes or among the rocks. They had to wait for the light of dawn to reveal his whereabouts. To be exact, Maqui not only loved him but respected him, recalling him as a good member of the community.

The ox Sombra and the bull Choloque were black too. Sombra was a good honest worker. Choloque was a devil. He hated work and all he wanted to do was fool around with the cows. He was always breaking loose, and if by chance they managed to get hold of him around sowing time, he would stand the work ill-naturedly for a day, and at night he'd get out and run away. After a prudent interval had passed he'd turn up with an innocent air as though nothing had happened. When they really needed him, they had to fasten him up at night with a leather or horse-hair halter, because he would bite through rope. But he loved the products of work as much as he hated work itself. There was no greedier marauder of the corn and wheat fields. He was as fond of cowpeas as the deer. He laid the fields bare and he would only get out when the exasperated villagers chased him with sling shots.

Public opinion loudly called for him to be gelded, but Maqui let things

go on as they were, for he was a beautiful animal, and though he was a devil he was a splendid sire. Like every pampered animal, he couldn't bear to see another bull pass him on the road, or go after a cow, or even eat grass or lick saltin his presence. He was ready to fight at once to put him in his place and humiliate him or drive him away. If his suspected rival was some distance off he would paw the ground, bellow a challenge, shake his head, and do everything he could think of to pick a fight. His power had made a bully of him. The other bulls were afraid of him. They had all felt his strength as, locked together, forehead to forehead, horn to horn—almost hand to hand, thought Maqui—they had to give ground and accept defeat from that arched, muscular, unbending neck. And as they fled, Choloque, for good measure, gored them in the side or haunch. And so he was the master. Until one day the bull Granizo decided to put a stop to it. Who knows how many gorings, enforced chastities, and humiliations Granizo had suffered? At any rate he decided that he had had enough.

One afternoon Porfirio Medrano, as he crossed the village square, saw two bulls in the distance fighting. Beyond the cornfield there was a pasture that went up the side of a steep hill whose rough, reddish black stones formed a kind of staircase. It was among these stones that the fight was going on, and Medrano stopped to watch the outcome of the duel. As it didn't show any signs of coming to an end he went to tell the mayor, who, in turn, called the Indian Shante, famed for his eyesight. He said:

"It's the bulls Granizo and Choloque." And they waited for Choloque to make the bold challenger turn tail.

But it did not happen that way. They were mere spots in the distance, but there they stayed. On both sides the stubborn struggle went on. At times the unevenness of the ground made them separate. But instantly they were back together, foreheads locked, pushing with redoubled vigor.

"Something is going to happen here," said Maqui. "We'd better separate them."

So they went after them. They had to take a roundabout way to get to that side of the slope, and go almost to the top of the hill. Though it was not very high the path was rough and winding, and it took them quite a while to get there. When they reached the slope they saw that the bulls were still fighting, and they hurried down, shouting, "Stop, bull, stop!" Shante fired rocks at them with his sling shot. He had a good aim, and the round rocks he used flew straight. He managed to

hit his mark several times in spite of the distance. "Stop, bull, stop," and the stones flew through the air, hitting the animals or bouncing on the ground. The bulls neither heard them nor felt them. Suddenly they stopped pushing as though to separate, but that was only atrick, for, quickly, one lunged at the other, who gave ground until he managed to stop his adversary.

They were fighting beside a gorge, and they both avoided backing in that direction, moving along the level part of the slope. They measured one another's strength, panting hard. The three men were coming near and could see them clearly. Each bull was trying to get his horns under those of the other to get more power behind his push. Choloque was a veteran and he managed to do it again and again. On one of these occasions Granizo sprang to one side and started to climb up as though he were running away, and Choloque in a frenzy of rage and pride made a lunge at him to gore him in the flank. Granizo took advantage of this moment to turn quickly, get his horns under Choloque's, and push with all his might. As Choloque rushed after Granizo he had turned his back to the gorge, and he had no time to face around. Helped by the slope, the full weight of his body, and the surprise of his rush Granizo pushed him steadily and quickly toward the gorge. The villagers stopped as they saw that the fall of Choloque was inevitable. Choloque struggled helplessly to keep his footing, but his hind legs went over the edge and he fell over the cliff, letting out a hoarse, terrified bellow. He kept on rolling without any other sound except the dull thuds against the rocks, till he reached the bushes at the bottom of the gorge. He was nothing but a mass of red, bleeding flesh.

Granizo, standing at the edge of the precipice, looked around for a moment, gave one short, defiant bellow, and then started up the path which was that of the triumph over tyranny. He did not inherit the aggressor's bad habits. He was even-tempered and fought only now and then, for reasons which Rosendo could imagine but did not investigate. The mayor believed that animals were like people, and that it was a mistake to think they had no feelings. Look at the way the cows behaved when one was slaughtered for the community. At the smell of the blood, the living ones gathered around the scene of the sacrifice, lowing long and mournfully as though bemoaning the death; and at the sound more and more cows gathered around the spot and there they stood lowing and lowing inconsolably for a day or more.

Maqui judged animals, like people, by their behavior, and he didn't feel very badly over the death of Choloque; though he knew his good

qualities, he disliked his unnecessary aggressiveness. Choloque had even gored the horse Frontino. Frontino was a bright sorrel, with one white foot and a white spot on his forehead that at night looked like a star. Rural maxims about horsesfavored him doubly: A light sorrel dies before he tires; White foot, light foot. He was bigger than all the community nags, and strong. The best herders used him for roping, and so did travelers who had to go on a long or important trip. During a roundup the herder Inocencio who was riding Frontino had tried to cut Choloque off from escaping. He stopped in the middle of the path where the bull had to pass, but instead of turning back Choloque attacked, goring Frontino in the chest. The wound festered, and the swelling kept growing bigger and harder. Rosendo cured him with kerosene and lemon juice, for Nasha Suro knew nothing about horses' ailments. Lemons were good for horse and sheep diseases. You string the fruit on a rope and tie it around the animal's neck. It looks funny to see them wearing their yellow necklaces.

The flock of sheep was big and it grew by the grace of God and the care of the shepherds. The children of the community, accompanied by several dogs, guided the sheep to the upland pastures; and while the sheep grazed, the children sang or played their rustic flutes and the dogs kept careful watch. All the sheep had to be protected against the mountain lions and foxes, and the lambs, against the condors. After the harvest would come the shearing. It had to be done in time or else the first rains and hailstorms would catch the sheep thinly covered and they would die of the cold. There was one year when, besides the shearing being late, the storms came early, lashing out with their gray and white whips when it was only October, and hundreds of sheep died. When morning came there they lay in the fold, as hard and stiff as pokers. Marguicha, one of the children who watched the sheep, wept bitterly when one of the lambs tried to nurse its dead mother. But experience and good sense saw to it that the shearing took place in time after that. And they also built a roof over one corner of the sheepfold, as the ranchers did.

Marguicha had grown like a flourishing plant. They called her Marga now. When the time came her lips and cheeks became flowers and her young breasts fruit. Her solid hips promised the fecundity of the deep

furrow. As they looked into her black eyes the young men of Rumi believed in happiness. In a word, she was life which fructifies and is eternal, for the destiny of woman is the same as that of the earth. Once more Maqui asked himself, "Which is better, woman or the earth?"

A sudden rush of wind shook the ears of wheat and carried away his thoughts. The darkness was complete, and though the fires in the hollow called to him cheerily, the old mayor felt all alone in the night.

And this was the history of Rumi. Probably a lot had been left out. Perhaps he could go back over his memories more carefully. Time had passed, sometimes like a plow that turns up the furrow, sometimes like a high wind that breaks off the branches. But the earth always remained, unchanging, strong, and in its love man flourished.

Rosendo Maqui came down from the rock and slowly took the path which forked at a steep hill called Cuchilla and divided the wheat field in two. The stalks of wheat rustled pleasantly, and here, there, and on all sides crickets and katydids chattered away, probably repeating the dialogue of some old tale Maqui knew. Heavy with years, he went on his way down the winding path.

All of a sudden a cry rang through the night, shaking the shadows and arousing the hills.

"Rosendoooo... Father Rosendoooo."

The crags answered and the echoing voices died away until they were lost in the rustling of the wheat and the chirp of crickets and katydids. The ribbon of road showed through the darkness and Maqui quickened his pace, watching carefully not to slip or stumble. His tired eyes hurt a little. A dark, swift, panting shape was climbing the slope. It was his dog Candela; he rubbed against Rosendo's legs, whined a little, and then ran back down the road. It was plain that he had come up to tell him something and now wanted him to hurry down to the village. Every now and then Candela would stop to whine and then run on ahead. Maqui trotted after him. There were the first stone walls beside which grew the palms and prickly pears. There at last were the houses lighted up by the hearth fires. Maqui walked quickly down the middle of the street, crossing like a specter through the pale light of the fire. Several Indians sitting on their doorsteps recognized and

greeted him. The church bell uttered a long resonant clang, and then pealed on slowly and steadily. The old man wanted to run, but he restrained himself, feeling that he should behave as became his age and his dignity.

There it was at last, at last, to one side of the square, his own house of adobe, the roof pressed down by the night. A group of Indians stood before it. The light from the hall sharpened their silhouettes and lengthened their shadows. The Indians made way for Maqui without saying a word. Clang, clang, the bell mourned. The grief-stricken voice of a woman sobbed aloud. The old man looked and stopped, silent and motionless. There in the hallway, on a bier of branches and yerbasanta, lay a body. His eyes misted over. Pascuala, his wife, had died.

Part Two

2

Zenobio Garcia and Other Notables

The body of Pascuala was dressed in her best clothes and laid upon a bed of blankets spread in the hall. Around the bier burned candles that were stuck on wads of damp clay, and replaced as they burned down. At the head of the bed lay the gifts: the food Pascuala liked best, sweetened corn-meal porridge, roasting ears, and parched corn in yellow gourds. Her soul would need this to nourish it and give it strength for its long journey.

The one who sang the praises, told of the happy hours, and wept was Teresa, the oldest daughter, who sat at one side of the body. On the other was Rosendo, sitting on a low bench, chewing his coca. Here and there in the hall and in the square, the rest of the villagers squatted or sat before the fire. Close to the mayor sat Anselmo, the paralyzed harpist. He looked mournfully first at Rosendo, then at the corpse. He had been telling his protector about the old woman's last moments. She had been sitting near the fire preparing supper when suddenly she groaned:

"I have a pain in my heart . . . May Rosendo forgive any wrong I did him . . . My children. . ."

And with that she fell over and died. Rosendo could not keep back a tear. What had he to forgive? He was the one who would have wanted to beg her pardon, and now he asked it of her soul.

The old man's eyes were lost in the night. They moved vaguely from star to star and at times he turned them toward his wife. She was not in life any more. She was in death. The wrinkled face and the frail body, in the red constellation of candles, were filled with an absolute dignity, with boundless silence. It was this silence, this peace, that the cries and sobs of Teresa tried to penetrate with her evocation of the past.

The hair of the oldest daughter hung disheveled about her dark face. Her bosom showed through her unfastened shawl, and her full breasts palpitated under her white blouse. She talked and moaned:

"Ay . . . ayayay, my little mother. Where was there another like her? Her heart was of gold and her words of silver. She had only to see a sick person, or a cripple, or anybody in distress, and there she was to heal them and help them . . . ayayay. Only good words fell from her lips, and if ever she happened to speak a word of gossip, for at times the tongue runs away with itself, right away she would cut herself short: 'We're gossiping,' she would say. 'It's bad, very bad to gossip.' Ayayay, my little mother . . . She was so pretty when she was a girl, and she was still fine looking after she had had so many children . . . and even when she was old she was never disagreeable with people."

There lay the calm, brown countenance, burnished by the lights, in proof of what she was saying. In spite of the wrinkled skin, a certain beauty lingered about her face. The full lips were softly closed, and between the closed eyes, a finely chiseled nose emerged from the calm, gentle forehead, framed by white hair. It was plain that this old woman had never been disagreeable with people. Teresa went on reciting and crying:

"There are women who become vain and overbearing when their husbands get into power. When my father became mayor people said: 'This is going to spoil Pascuala.' Spoil her! Her heart was good and she knew how to manage her household and her work and keep her place. She could spin and weave and dye . . . Her husband had fine clothes and plenty of them, and her children never lacked for anything while they were under her control. She even wove for poor crippled Anselmo . . . She loved the poor cripple very much . . ."

Anselmo, huddled beside the mayor, hiding his misshapen legs under the folds of his red poncho, dropped his head on his breast. A tear left a shining wake as it rolled down his thin cheek.

"Ayayay, my little mother . . . She always had a pot of food on hand and she fed anyone who came in, stranger or villager. She never paid any attention to who it was, she gave to all. Some people give, especially if the stranger is an old woman, because they think it is the spirit of the earth traveling about to see how people behave, and who have reaped and sown, and if they are grateful for what the earth has

given them. They know that if they don't give, the earth will get angry and the crops won't be good. My mamma Pascuala gave to everybody, old or young, man or woman . . . She would say, 'If a person is hungry he should be fed.' "

Rosendo recalled how Pascuala had always helped him in his work as mayor with her simple kindness and her natural good sense. She never made any trouble for the men by interfering in the affairs of the community, and she never flaunted her position as wife of the mayor to arouse the envy of the women. As she always did good, and was a model of mothers, everyone respected her. And it may have been that one of the old women she fed was the spirit of the earth.

"Ayayay, my little mother . . . Once she almost died, she was so sick, and she promised to pray a whole year to good Saint Isidore if she got well. And so she did, just as she had promised, praying a whole year without missing a single day . . . Ayayay, my little mother . . . She did good to all and wrong to none . . . Where is there another like her? She said woman had been born to do good. . . ."

Rosendo was afraid he might start to cry. He added more coca to the wad in his cheek, and quietly cleared his throat. His wife had really been good. She did whatever she could for his happiness and that of all; the community was better because she had lived in it.

The lamentation went on. The women listened more closely than the men who, especially if they were a little way off, whispered about their own affairs as they chewed their coca. The matter did not concern them directly. The older women, whose shortcomings stood out in contrast to the loudly praised virtues, forgave the dead woman her superiority, perhaps even praised her; and the young girls felt the desire to make their lives like hers. There was a feeling of veneration and respect in the air. As for Eulalia, the lazy, mischief-making wife of Abram, who might have profited from hearing the desirability of working and holding one's tongue, she wasn't even there. She was at the house of a neighbor, with other women of the family, preparing food for the mourners.

Teresa had finished her laments and praises just as the villagers who had gone for rum to the neighboring district of Muncha came back driving before them three sly donkeys. Each one carried two fat-bellied jars.

Muncha was famous for its water. And that is not a joke. The town had only one insignificant spring of water for its needs, and for this reason its dwellers were known far and wide as the chuqui cuajos, which means dry bladders. For short, they were called just chuquis. In the summer, when they could not collect the rain water that in the winter dripped from the roofs, this water shortage was the most characteristic feature of the place. The spring, which was on a hillside, dripped into a spout made of a cactus frond, and in front of this stood dozens of women with water jars under their arms. And while the slender stream gurgled sweetly into the jar of the one who had arrived first, the other women began to talk until their turn came. There they sat, hour after hour, gossiping to their heart's content. And every kind of story, lie, quarrel, and confusion had its origin here. Sometimes there were free-for-all fights, in which not only heads, but what was worse, the tediously filled water jars were broken. The women's quarrels spread down to the town and started real conflagrations between husbands and relatives. But the need of some kind of agreement about getting a turn at the waterspout brought about an armistice. Winter did the rest. If any differences took place at this time of the year, the women would threaten one another with, "You just wait till the time comes to go to the spring."

It might be assumed that the chuquis were too lazy to build a canal to bring water from the hills. It should be said to their credit that they had thought about it; but the nearest hill was that of Rumi which was three leagues off, and they would have had to make a big cut in the rock with dynamite. They didn't have the money for this. Once a candidate for congressman offered to get them a grant for the work if they would vote for him. They did so, but he lost to someone in Lima who hadn't offered them anything and whom they didn't even know. All the congressmen were like that. Perhaps they knew nothing about Muncha. In the summertime the red-tiled roofs stood out against the barren landscape. In the fields burned dry by the sun the bushes and the grass withered and fell over, choked by the brown dusty earth. Around the spring there grew a few green bushes, but they did not thrive, for the natives of Muncha did not encourage any competition. Around the little trickle the women in their black shawls and variegated skirts gathered like a band of vultures over their prey.

So it is not strange that the chuquis liked their liquor; they were thirsty. Besides, it helped them over the bad times and gave them the whip hand over the women. And because, too, there are always sorrows to ease and joys to celebrate, we can well understand why the inhabitants of Muncha had good reasons for their tippling. They went as far as the Maranion valleys for their rum, and sometimes they

brought back the sugar-cane juice, and distilled it themselves. Their stills were large and very good, so that they were able to supply the shops which dealt with the local and outside trade. The villagers of Rumi bought there, too, when something unforeseen prevented them from preparing their traditional red corn liquor. Their relations with the chuquis were pleasant. The latter did not have much in the way of crops because they were not very enterprising farmers, and they could not plant gardens, as they would have dried up in the summer; so they always bought wheat, corn, and garden truck. They either paid for it outright or with rum.

So that night a committee from Muncha, headed by the governor, a half-breed, as round and red as a water jar, came back with the villagers who had been sent for the rum. The governor had donated part of the rum and had lent them the third donkey to bring it back. He was famous in Muncha and its vicinity. He had one still of metal and another of clay, a house on the hill, and a beautiful daughter who had a servant and pots of carnations. These were kept on the porch of the house. In order not to interfere with the gathering of water during the day, the servant had to water the plants at night. It was pleasant to find on this yellow desert that reeked of rum a spot agreeably perfumed by the carnations that bloomed red and white. Behind her row of flowerpots, softly reclining in a rocking chair, sat their mistress. She had large deep eyes and a mouth copied from the carnations. Her round breasts and full hips seemed to await a joyous motherhood. She did nothing, and, of course, never went for water. She watched over her flowers, and her parents watched over Miss Rosa Estela, for that was her name, like another flower.

The governor was called Zenobio Garcia and he made his way through the villagers, followed by his party, to the side of Rosendo Maqui. They exchanged greetings and a few words. Garcia told him that the people of Muncha extended their deepest sympathy in this hour of grief, and he and his friends had come to represent them at the wake. After which they withdrew a short distance and sat down in a group by themselves. Their straw hats and cotton suits showed white in the darkness.

The rum was divided up. Slowly, as befitted the gravity of the occasion, the villagers came to receive their share in bottles, clay pitchers, and gourds of all sizes and shapes. The children and relatives of Maqui poured out the liquor, which gave off a strong, pungent

smell. The villagers went back to their places forming little groups, and the vessel of rum passed from mouth to mouth. The night was growing chilly, and the rum warmed the blood just as the coca, which was used in abundance, kept the pale flame of wakefulness burning.

At a certain moment the villager Doroteo Quispe, a broad-shouldered Indian, knelt down at the feet of the corpse, facing it, and took off his hat, revealing a bushy thatch of hair. Everybody then knelt and removed their hats. To one side, the group of visitors glimmered in the dark. And Doroteo began to say the Lord's Prayer in a hoarse monotonous voice, emphatic and mumbling at the same time, "Our father which art in heaven . . ." In the middle of the prayer he stopped for the others to say the rest, "Give us this day . . ." The low murmur was like the buzzing of insects until it ended with a loud "Amen." And then it began again. They prayed this way for a long time. The Indian Doroteo was a mighty praying man, and besides the usual prayers he knew the Twelve Peals, which is good to protect one from evil spirits, and from foul air when searching for buried treasure or testing mines; the Magnificat, which cures the sick and even the dying, "unless other be the will of God"; the prayer of the Virgin of Monserrat, which is carefully guarded by the priests so it will not be used by evildoers, and that of the Righteous Judge, invaluable to save one from pursuit, to avert the peril of death, to insure victory in fights, and to save a man from prison. But now, for Pascuala's good soul, he said only the Lord's Prayer, Hail Marys, the Creed, and the Salve.

The night was far gone when the prayers ended and food was served. The hours dragged on and many of the watchers stretched out on the ground. Around the body the candles still burned and overhead the sky had lighted all its stars.

Rosendo Maqui stayed awake, in a vigil that reviewed his wife's whole life and that accepted her death with an overwhelming sorrow, which was sadness mingled with a vague religious feeling and an awareness of earth and sky.

The golden, rosy dawn came at last and then the day broke behind the rocky heights of Rumi. The light fell softly and sweetly over the hillsides, over the eucalyptus and willows, over the tiled roof of the church and the houses, over the fences and over the watchers.

And when the sun had risen "two hands' breadth" in the sky, they wrapped the corpse in its blankets, laid it upon the stretcher, and carried it to the cemetery. The procession was large because all the villagers came, including those who had not been at the wake. Beside

the body walked Rosendo Maqui, his sons and daughters, the selectmen, and the committee from Muncha. Behind, all the village of Rumi, men and women, young and old, perhaps five hundred all told. The only ones left behind were the children and the cripple, Anselmo. When he saw them taking away his mother he struggled desperately to get to his feet, his helplessness forgotten, his arms beating the air, until finally they dropped helpless. He sank back as motionless as a tree trunk. But his heart leaped in his breast like a faithful animal chained up.

In the cemetery they dug a deep grave into which they laid the body. Many of the bystanders, following the pious custom, helped fill in the dirt. At the end they put up a cross of rough branches. The daughters began to weep again, and the sons supported their old father with their arms and with their presence.

Thus, Pascuala, wife of the Mayor Rosendo Maqui, was watched over and buried. The earth as it covered her body, its task nobly fulfilled, covered, too, a bit of the past and of tradition.

When it was over, the Governor Zenobio Garcia stopped a moment in the village square, surrounded by his committee. The nightlong vigil had turned his reddish face a little pale. With his straw hat pushed back on his head, and his thumbs hooked through his leather belt, he looked about him with the air of a person of great importance. At moments he drummed on his fat belly with his fingers. His glances seemed to be studying the layout of the village and its surroundings, as he talked with his men. Finally the visitors went to take their leave of Rosendo and then left.

None of the villagers noticed anything out-of-the-way in the attitude of the men from Muncha. They had merely come as friends to the wake and the burying, and now they were going back to their town over the road they always traveled, bathed in the good everyday sun. . . .

3

Days come, days go....

Days come, days go.... These words are time.

After Pascuala's death time went on.

In the large grain fields of the community the wheat and the corn went on ripening. In the little ones, patches of private enterprise that flourished behind the houses, the sensuous lima beans in flower swayed gently, the cowpeas filled out their nubbled pods, and the cabbages were giant green emeralds against the mounded-up blackness of the earth.

Overhead passed screeching bands of parrots. Some were small and blue, others large and green. The flying squadrons circled and then took off: the blue ones toward the wheat, the green toward the corn. With slings and stones those on guard scared them away, and then they screeched louder than ever and, rising high in the air, disappeared in the distance in search of other fields.

The huanchacho, a beautiful gray bird with a red breast, which loves the tender ears of corn, sang and sang jubilantly. His song marked the ripening of the corn.

A warm gentle breeze, laden with pollen and the rustle of wheat, carried a fragrance of fruitfulness.

To keep Rosendo company Juanacha and her husband went to live with him. She was the youngest of his daughters and youth lavished its graces upon her. Deft, strong, rosy-cheeked, and bright of eye, she came and went about her household tasks, chattering away in a high, clear voice that seemed to come from a hidden vein of gold.

Anselmo, Rosendo, and the dog Candela, who had been given this name because his coat was the color of fire, had not yet been able to forget the dead. Anselmo had put his harp away in the corner, hiding the temptation of its strings under a blanket. Rosendo spent his time seated on the doorstep, given over to his silent sorrow, with Candela

at his feet. Rather, the dog was on his feet, and Rosendo enjoyed it, for the dog warmed him with the heat of its body. Candela spent the day in a melancholy drowsiness, and at night he howled.

Life ran so joyously through Juanacha's veins that her sadness, or, so to speak, her discreet composure, was more an act of respect toward her father. She had loved her mother dearly, but the well-being of her body left no room for sadness in her heart. It would be hard to say what her husband felt. He was a quiet Indian who rarely expressed his emotions.

Juanacha had a little boy who was crawling, and already trying to stand up and reach the mysterious world of tables and beds. At times, in his wormlike efforts, he would come upon the feet of his grandfather, if they were not covered up by the dog. He would pull with his fat little hands at the sandal straps, pat the hard feet, and then raise his head to look at the giant. Rosendo would lift him up in his arms, saying some affectionate word to him, and the baby would knock off his straw hat and grab hold of his gray hair. The old man smiled as he scolded him: "There now, let go, you rascal. . . ."

Rosendo's breast overflowed with tenderness and contentment.

In the village little by little, like the embers of a fire late at night, the memory of Pascuala was fading away. But it could not be said she was forgotten. People spoke of Rosendo's grief, and how fitting it was. And when, in the night, the dog Candela howled, the villagers said:

"He's howling for Pascuala."

"Maybe he sees her spirit."

"They say dogs can see spirits and if a person puts the matter from a dog's eyes on his own he can see the spirits at night too."

"That's awful. It's like witchcraft."

"Poor Pascuala."

"Why poor? She was old and it was time for her to die. A person can't live forever."

Rosendo was borne up by the same thought. In the life of man and woman there is a time for everything. So there also comes a time to die. What is sad is a premature death that cuts off life in its flower, but when a person is old, it's the proper conclusion. He felt very close

to the earth as he thought this. He saw that every living thing is born, grows, dies, and returns to the earth. Like Pascuala, like all the others, he, too, had grown old and must return to the earth.

The masons were at work on the school that they were building beside the church where there was the shade and aroma of the eucalyptus trees. The adobe maker, bent over the hard surface of the village square, molded his bricks with care. Two helpers brought him buckets of wet clay from a hole where they mixed it well with their feet. Then he held out the mold, which the helper filled with clay, and he pressed it down and smoothed it off with a board, and then slipped the mold off with a dexterous movement, leaving the brick on the ground. And the other helper was there with his share and the process was repeated. The rectangular adobes formed long rows. The good summer sun took over the task of hardening them. The dry ones, which were those in the front rows, were carried away to be used in the building.

The master mason squatting on the wall was proud of his dexterity and every now and then shouted to his helpers, "Adobes, adobes." The foundation of the wall was of thick stone. The builder, Pedro Mayta, put the adobes together with a cement of clay, and staggered the rows as he joined them, so that the cracks would not be on top of one another, and the wall would be stronger.

Rosendo Maqui, who had been watching the work from his doorway one afternoon, walked over to them.

"Good afternoon, taita," said Pedro, pressing an adobe into place, and evening the clay with his trowel, "it's good to see you here."

The other workers, even those who were treading the mud, far away, alongside the cornfield, came over to speak to him. Maqui answered with a discreet smile of satisfaction. He liked to see people with muddy hands, or other traces of their toilet—cockleburs, wheat chaff, or corn silk stuck to their clothes—for he thought these were the ennobling signs of work.

"Is it coming along, Master Pedro?"

"You can see for yourself, taita. Maybe we'll soon have a little school."

"Little school? Big school! Will it hold a hundred children?"

"Even two hundred."

"Well, there might be at that. . . ."

Maqui stepped inside the foundation. The yellow wall was breast-high. It smelled of fresh clay. There was to be a door and four windows, two toward the morning sun and the other two on the same side as the door.

"You understand what I told you, Pedro. Otherwise that damned school commissioner might say . . . what was it he said . . . ? This isn't . . . this isn't . . . I can't remember the word. Do you recall it?"

Mayta answered that he didn't know it, and didn't even have any idea what it could be about. The others had gone back to their jobs, and he began to shout again, for the mayor's benefit:

"Adobes, adobes."

Rosendo, Heaven only knows why, began to test the solidity of the walls with his lloque staff. They certainly were strong.

"What about the roof, father? Thatch or tile?"

"Tile, I think. And you'll have to tamp the floor down well. And it would be a good thing for Mardoqueo to weave a rug so it will be—oh, now I remember the word—hygienic."

"Yes, that's what the commissioner said. Hygienic. And what's that?"

"Whatever is good for the health . . . That's what he said."

Mayta stopped laying the adobes and began to laugh. Rosendo looked at him questioningly. At last he stopped and explained:

"Isn't the commissioner one of those dudes? I know him, I know him. He spends his time in Albino's place drinking. Does he think it's good for the health to drink morning, noon, and night? He's not very hygienic."

And they both laughed heartily, mouthing the word between guffaws. They felt very happy. Then Maqui said:

"We're really going to have a school. I wish I had been born later so I could be a boy now and go to school."

"That would be nice."

"But it's good, too, to be able to say to the children, 'You go learn something.'"

"You're right, taita. I have two; they will learn something; but as for me, I hate to admit it, but my head is awfully thick now. If I even see a paper with what they call letters on it, I get nervous, and as I know I won't be able to learn, I'm even afraid."

"That's because we never learned anything," answered Maqui. And then he added, earnestly, "But they will learn."

He went down to the clay pit, which showed a foot and a half of light black earth and under that the sticky, yellow clay, and then to the place where they were molding the adobes. He had a word for each of the workers. He spoke and joked with them a little. He felt himself loved and respected. He returned to his house thinking that this was the finest work the community had ever undertaken, and the school would be very handsome. The children would recite their lessons in their high-pitched voices and then they would play in the square, in the sunshine, or in the shade of the eucalyptus trees. Rosendo Maqui was satisfied.

In the fields the ears of the yellowing grain were dropping and the red poppies swayed gently on their stems. The deep-rooted bushes and trees preserved their green luxuriance and displayed the glory of their fruits.

The prickly pears, which grew beside or upon the stone walls and at the beginning and the end of the main street, were beginning to ripen. The fleshy leaves were studded with fruit that looked like rubies and topazes.

The magueys with their bluish stalks that grew beside the prickly pears or scattered over the fields raised heavenward their straight bare fronds like a visible form of silence. At the top their gray bareness burst into a plume of white flowers or turned into a cluster of shining fruit. This was a rare sight, for they bloomed only once, at the end of their tenth year, just before they died; but even this long fiber-hearted stalk rendered a beautiful tribute to life.

The clumps of unicos, which had been promising their gifts for some time, were now full of ripeness. In the ravine on the side of Rumi hill they formed a kind of violet blanket. The berries they yielded were

shaped like little squat vases, and had a pleasant tart sweetness.

The boys and girls of Rumi, leading the younger ones by the hand, would go to the ravine and all come back with purple lips. They liked the berries as much as the turtledoves did.

Great bands of these birds came from the sultry lowlands of the tropical rivers, where they lived on the seeds of the coca, to the temperate zone when the berries of the unico were in season. They came to Rumi, and especially to the ravine. After they had gorged themselves all morning, they would perch, as was their habit, in the highest trees and begin to sing. Crowds of them would gather in the tops of the pauco trees. One would begin with a kind of long, melancholy call, on different notes, and the others would answer all together, with a gentle coo. But the delicacy of the clear melody did not detract from its vigor, and both the call and the answering chorus could be heard a long way off.

It was a song that rose and fell, loving and insistent, and it filled the soul with a peculiar gentle calm tinged with melancholy.

One morning Rosendo Maqui was walking down the main street on his way back from Doroteo Quispe's house, when he noticed a fine-looking horseman, accompanied by two others, coming around the curve of the road where it lost itself behind the hill down which the Reds had once upon a time made their appearance.

Rolling a cloud of dust before them they advanced quickly, reaching the square at the same time as Rosendo, and there they met. The first rider pulled up his horse and the others did the same. The dapple gray, with its beautiful silver and leather trappings, chafed at the restraint of the bridle. The rider, a white man with a hard expression, an aquiline nose, and a stiff mustache, wore a white straw hat, a light linen poncho with white and blue stripes, and heavy buck spurs. His fellow riders, modest overseers, paled into insignificance beside him.

It was Don Alvaro Amenabar y Roldan in person, whom the villagers and the people of the vicinity called just Don Alvaro Amenabar for short. They were unaware of his rank, but they never lost sight of the importance that his position as rich land-owner conferred on him.

Rosendo Maqui greeted him. Without answering him Amenabar said haughtily:

"You know this land is mine and I have filed suit for it."

"Sir, the community has its papers. . . ."

The rancher paid no attention to his words, and pointing to the square asked disdainfully:

"What's that you're building alongside the church?"

"That's going to be our school, sir."

And Amenabar answered still more scornfully:

"That's very good! The temple of religion on one side and the temple of science on the other."

Saying this he set spurs to his horse and galloped off, followed by his men. The group disappeared behind the rock where the rough road to Muncha began.

The mayor kept turning over and over Amenabar's words in his mind, and he understood all the astute menace in the cynical threat and the cruel sarcasm. There was no reason for him to insult them like this. Poor and ignorant the villagers might be, but they had never done wrong to any one, and they were trying to get along as well as their meager resources and their backwardness permitted. Then why this wickedness? For the first time Maqui felt hate surge up in his heart, and even though it was justified it upset him so that he swayed as he walked. It was sad and bitter, the whole thing ... Well ... time would tell. ...

In the later hours of the afternoon Rosendo ordered four horses to be shut up in the barn lot. The next day, before it was light, at that indefinite hour in which the shadows seem reluctant to retreat before the dawn, they were saddled. When cinches and straps had been adjusted, Abram Maqui started out with his son Augusto, a robust lad who gripped his legs firmly against the sides of a newly broken colt, and the selectman, Goyo Auca, who led Frontino. The group did not ride far. They stopped in front of the mayor's house.

In the kitchen the bright flame of the fire glowed, and Juanacha, sitting beside it, was preparing something.

"He'll be right out," she said to them.

They dismounted, and in a little while Rosendo Maqui came out of the

darkness of his room. He answered the respectful greetings briefly, approved the preparation of the horses, and sat down before the fire with the visitors. Juanacha served them a stew of beans, dried beef, and dried corn in big yellow gourds, which they ate noisily, tossing an occasional scrap to Candela, who lay there with begging eyes fixed on them.

Daybreak arched over the world like a white cavern.

Then they mounted. The old man was tactfully helped on to Frontino by Abram. It was now light, and the breath of men and horses could be seen forming faint little clouds as it condensed in the chill of the morning.

Rumi was waking up with sleepy slowness. An occasional early door was opened. The chickens jumped down from the roosts fastened to the back wall of the houses, and the proud roosters crowed and flapped their wings emphatically. The women began to start up their fires, and the ones whose embers had died out completely went down the street to borrow fire from a neighbor. In the barn the cows lowed tenderly. Suddenly the morning shot out its arrows of gold from the hilltops and the birds began to sing. Larks, huanchachos, rocotoros and sparrows mingled their voices in a song of rejoicing to the light.

The sharp trot of the horses, headed by Frontino, filled the main street. The cowherd Inocencio and two women were milking in the stableyard. Gently the cows licked their calves while, through dark hands, the musical streams that flowed from the turgid exuberance of their udders filled the buckets.

One of the women called out:

"Taita Rosendo, have some of the fresh milk."

Rosendo and his men came over and drank the rich milk which was still warm. The milkers were two young girls. Their jet black hair hung in braids, making a frame for their broad smooth faces. Their wide mouths held their peace without effort; and their dark eyes were a miracle of quiet tenderness. One wore a red skirt, the other a green. They had taken off their shawls to work and the simple white blouse, with its embroidered border, revealed the round arms and the undisturbed beauty of the young breasts. While the other men drank the milk, the lad Augusto, from the vantage point of his horse, feasted his eyes on the girls, with an occasional glance at the low neck of their blouses. He began to pay them compliments.

"Aren't the girls pretty! I'm going to get up early and come out and help them. If they liked me as much as they do the calves. . . ."

They smiled at him and then lowered their eyes, speechless with embarrassed delight.

The mayor pretended not to have heard anything, and said to them:

"Don't forget to take a double portion to Leandro. How is he getting along?"

"Better," answered one of them.

The riders put great wads of coca into their cheeks and set out, followed by Candela, who had managed to evade Juanacha's vigilance. They followed the road which they knew by heart, the road down which had come the Reds one day, and another day, more recently, Don Alvaro Amenabar. They continued along the hillside and then crossed the creek called Lombriz, the boundary between the lands of Rumi and the Umay Ranch.

The dense thicket that overhung the creek went on up the hillside until it disappeared from sight among the steep crags, and turned down until it was swallowed by the ravine of a hill that stood next to Peana. Lombriz Creek ran parallel to the Rumi Gorge, but the village paid no attention to it. The brook that supplied the villagers with their water came from the gorge, for Lombriz Creek was so small that in summer it was almost invisible.

During the winter it grew with the help of the rains, but the rest of the year it had only the water that flowed from the spring. But the noisy brook, which cut itself a wide channel, came from the big lake that lay in the broad plateau behind the hill of Rumi.

This time the villagers crossed the creek as usual, without paying much attention to it, except for the mayor. The horses' hoofs muddied the quiet water. Candela tried to keep himself dry by jumping from stone to stone on the bed of the creek. Rosendo carefully examined the course it took from the ravine to the crags. There were berries along Lombriz Creek, too, and turtledoves and birds.

The road became a trail, fashioned by horses' hoofs rather than by picks and shovels, and started to climb a slope.

The hand of man was revealed in an occasional step that broke the abruptness of the rocky inclines, and in a cut here and there to make

the descent less steep. On both sides there were thick shrubs and infrequent trees that disappeared as the path climbed higher, giving way to sharp outcroppings of rock and occasional scrawny magueys and cactuses that stood like green candelabras before immense stone altars.

The path wound about, zigzagged, climbed, and twisted. It ascended as though in a great hurry, almost panting. The horses were little mountain ponies, sure-footed and small of hoof. Frontino, who, being of better stock, was larger, made up for the size of his hoofs with the skill that comes from long training. His longer steps kept him ahead of the others, and every now and then Rosendo had to stop to wait for them to catch up. Frontino would turn his head and watch with condescending friendliness his shaggy, distant companions: one bay, one black, and one sorrel.

The little cavalcade toiled on. Rosendo recalled the recent happenings and tried to put his thoughts in order. "I'm going to die; my father came for me last night," Pascuala had said. Afterward the snake had run across the road with its portent of evil, and he had been trying to figure what it could mean without paying enough attention to that dream. Now Pascuala was with her father and the other villagers in that mysterious life to which one goes from this one, as though through the air, just the soul floating along. Father Mestas, the priest, talked about Hell, but Rosendo did and didn't believe in Hell. How could you tell? If the worst came to the worst, there was Doroteo Quispe and his prayers. The priests themselves say it's never a mistake to pray. And now the misfortune had happened, and that did away with the supposition that the bad luck might affect the community. This matter of the boundaries would have to go to court.

"Careful, don't slip, Frontino. You almost fell that time. Stop your trembling and snorting. We're across now."

They had been going along the edge of a ravine. A stone slipped and Frontino almost lost his footing. The rock rolled down the side of the cliff, bouncing from stone to stone until it was broken to pieces. Rosendo once suggested to Don Alvaro Amenabar that they build a good road, the community building one half and the Umay Ranch the other. Don Alvaro had refused, saying he seldom used this route, and, anyway, the path was good enough to keep one from slipping.

At last they reached the crest. And there the four riders stopped, and Rosendo spoke looking around at the now distant crags at the foot of which Lombriz Creek begins:

"Listen well, you, particularly, Augusto, for you're a boy and you must learn things so you'll know them when we are dead. Over there, by those crags"—Rosendo stretched out his arm and his gnarled forefinger showed at the edge of his poncho—"where Lombriz Creek starts, the boundary begins, marked by piles of stones about a yard or a yard-and-a-half high, and goes on to the very summit known as El Alto."

All had seen the stones that marked the boundary, especially Goyo Auca, who, as selectman, was supposed to have full knowledge of such things. Rosendo's voice continued, accompanied by the pointing finger:

"Right over the plateau of El Alto, following the very top of those black ridges, goes the boundary, past Lake Yanañahui to the cliffs that overlook the village of Muncha. It follows those cliffs, and then descends to the white sands of the river Oeros. Those are the boundaries of Rumi. . . ."

The riders looked out with attention and affection on the bright-colored happy village and the lands that were theirs, theirs and the community's. They were broad and beautiful. Even those that were too rocky for cultivation had a charm of their own. Lording it over them, erect with the mighty power of his rocky summit, the hill of Rumi talked with the clouds.

Rosendo Maqui turned his horse around and got back on the path which now wound more gently, until it came out upon the highland plateau. It was a broad plain covered with tall grass and rocks, swept by a sharp steady wind, which made it cold in spite of the sun that shone in the sky which seemed close above. The intense blue of the sky, flecked with scattered white clouds, stood out in contrast to the yellowish fields of hay and the reddish black and bluish color of the rocks. Rosendo loved this abrupt, savage grandeur, although it did not blind him to the beauties of the warmer, less barren lands.

The dog Candela, which had trotted at Frontino's heels all the way up the trail, now began to frisk about the plateau. He ran barking at the black and white coriquingas and the brown liclics. With screeches and squawks they flew off a stone's throw, barely rising from the ground. Almost all the birds of the heights, with the exception of the condor, fly close to the earth, as though they were sated with immensity from merely looking out upon the vast spaces and the infinite expanse of sun and sky.

The bay mustang that Augusto was riding, now that the hardships of the climb were over, thought it an opportune moment to assert himself. He suddenly rose up on his hind legs, and whirled around trying to make for home. The rider, gripping the horse firmly with his legs, reined in until the bit cut into the horse's mouth, and sank his heels into the horse's withers, while he crisscrossed his flanks with crackling lashes of the quirt. The duel between the mustang and Augusto went on for a long time, until finally, trembling with impotence and drenched with the sweat of fatigue, the animal gave in. Then Augusto, to round off his victory, got him off the trail, and made him lower his head until his muzzle touched the stirrup, and then brought him to a dead stop in the midst of a gallop. When he had done this with what skill he possessed—for perfection in this field is not a thing to be achieved in one day—he came back to the trail and took his place behind the mayor. A lock of black hair fell across his perspiring forehead into his eyes, which sparkled with satisfaction. Abram, who understood horsebreaking, and Goyo Auca, who knew nothing about it, both praised him loudly. Rosendo turned his head and said only:

"Well done, boy."

But inside he felt proud of his grandson, and pleased that a villager, who had only recently learned to spit coca, should give proof of such skill.

The path entered upon a broader road that ran from north to south, making a streak of lightness against the rising and falling slopes of the hills, disappearing in the turns to emerge again and finally fade into a pale thread on the violet heights. The road came from distant and unknown regions and villages, and went to regions and villages equally unknown. It exercised a strange disturbing fascination over the villagers.

Suddenly a pass opened on one side of the plateau, and far away in the distance there appeared a broad plain.

"That's where the devil lives," said Rosendo, reining in his horse.

The plain was cut up into grain and alfalfa fields, and in the middle of them stood a group of large, red-roofed buildings. In the center of the court around which they were built rose a tall eucalyptus tree and long rows of poplars—recognizable by their erect slenderness—ran like stripes along the roads. There were cows in the pasture, horses in the barns, and, from the distance, the going and coming of the men

seemed that of ants. In these houses lived Don Alvaro Amenabar, surrounded by his family and his servants. The beautiful plain and the plateau from which the villagers looked down belonged to him, as did all the land they had ridden through since they left Lombriz Creek, and much of the land to be seen on one side and the other was his. He had so much and he still wanted more.

Goyo Auca said, looking at a path that ran down the gap toward the ranch house:

"It would be a good thing to go and see Don Alvaro now. . . ."

Rosendo Maqui did not answer him, but went along the road that ran from north to south. Frontino trotted ahead of the others. Rosendo made a sign to Goyo Auca, and waited while he urged on his nag to catch up with him. The mayor spoke:

"I'm going to tell you something. The day Don Alvaro Amenabar rode over I saw it would do no good to talk to him, and that we could do nothing with him by fair means. I have watched him for a long time, and I tell you that you can soften anything, even iron if you put it in the fire, but not a hard heart. He insulted me and he insulted us all with his scorn. I didn't say anything about it—what was the use? If the villagers see their selectmen or their mayor insulted and unable to do anything about it, they lose confidence in them. And if the people have no confidence in their authorities, it's bad for everybody. Isn't that true?"

Goyo Auca responded:

"It's true, taita."

Those left behind were talking about the breaking of the horse. Abram criticized one thing his son had done. There was a moment when his foot had slipped out of the stirrup, and that was a dangerous business. The first care of a rider is never to let go the reins or the stirrups. If he remembers this and has strength and a steady head, the horse can buck as much as it wants to.

The cavalcade proceeded at a trot. The wind tugged at the horses' manes and the ponchos. They came upon a large, slowly moving flock of sheep, and Candela began to chase the sheep in fun.

"Here Candela, Candela-a," shouted Rosendo, and the dog dropped his tail between his legs and hung his head, sincerely ashamed.

A little farther on they met the shepherds, two Indians, a man and a woman, wearing home-made woolen hats, and raggedly clothed. The man was sitting on a knoll, chewing his coca. The woman was behind a stone to protect her against the wind, trying to cook some potatoes in a clay pot over a fire of twisted bunches of dry grass. The fire smoldered and threw out a cloud of smoke. Rosendo and Goyo stopped to watch, and Abram and his son caught up with them. The mayor decided to speak to the man, who was nearer to the road.

"Are you Don Alvaro Amenabar's shepherds?"

The dirty hat the man wore was pulled down to his eyes, and looked like a mushroom. He sat as though he had not heard a word. After a long pause he answered:

"Yes, sheep. . . ."

The villagers felt pity, though Augusto could hardly keep back a smile.

"Yes, I see you are the shepherds of sheep," the mayor went on patiently, "but I wanted to know if you work for Don Alvaro Amenabar."

The silent one looked down at his pants through which the dark flesh showed in places, and said:

"Cloth tearing. . . ."

Goyo Auca suggested that maybe the shepherd only saw the foreman and had never seen the rancher or didn't know his name. Rosendo tried putting the question a different way.

"Are you from the Umay Ranch?"

"Yes."

"Have you been shepherds here for a long time?"

The woman, flat-breasted, dirty-faced, and tangle-haired, came over to the man and whispered something to him. Her squalid ugliness was pitiful. Poverty goes harder with a woman than with a man.

"How do they treat you?" the mayor went on.

The shepherds persisted in their silence, looking at the sheep which were spread out over hill and hollows. Not a word did they answer. They seemed unaware of everything around them except the sheep.

They had withdrawn into themselves, and silence surrounded them like the rock behind which smoldered the sullen fire. Abram suggested that perhaps they suspected this was a trap laid for them by those of the ranch, and for this reason they would not talk. So the villagers went their way, and Rosendo said:

"Those poor devils are the kind that get a whipping for every sheep that is lost. Haven't you heard Casiana and Paula tell about it? It's odd that they should be around here; they're generally high up in the mountains."

But at this moment the attention of the travelers was attracted by the appearance of several armed men in the distance. They were riding good horses and were followed by mule drivers guiding a string of mules loaded with big white bundles.

"What if they should be bandits?" asked Goyo Auca suspiciously.

"You can see by their load that they're peaceable folk," answered Rosendo.

Abram said jokingly:

"If they are bandits, we ought to have Doroteo here to say the prayer of the Righteous Judge."

"That's right, that's right," they all laughed.

As soon as they met up with them, it was plain that they were not bandits. They were well-to-do travelers, traders, perhaps, or ranchers, or miners. Their clothes were those of the better classes, and the string of mules seemed indicative of rich possessions.

"Hello, friends," said the one who was in the lead, lowering the muffler which protected his white face from the wind, and pulling his horse up short. "Where are you riding?"

"To the town, sir," answered Rosendo, stopping too.

Both groups stopped face to face, and looked one another over carefully after the manner of travelers who are weary of the monotony and loneliness of the landscape. The first man said:

"Do you know if there are people around here who would like to make money, lots of money?"

"Sir, in the community of Rumi we would all like to make money," answered the mayor.

"Yes, but you can't stay there and make it. You have to go to the jungle to get rubber. A man can make fifty, a hundred, as much as two hundred soles a day. And even more, if he is lucky. I supply everything you need: in those packs I have tools, arms, all sorts of instruments—"

"Sir, we till the land."

"Don't think you need any special training to tap a tree and get out the sap. That's all it is. . . ."

Augusto was watching the man with eyes that revealed his amazement at the sums of money that had been mentioned. The man addressed his remarks to him:

"As a better guarantee I even pay in advance. Five hundred soles, which can be paid back out of wages in the twinkling of an eye."

Rosendo refused once more:

"Sir, we till the land."

And he started off followed by his group. Augusto had not been able to reach a decision because of his inexperience, the rapid fire of the dialogue, and, above all, the simple strength of his grandfather's words. So he went along with the villagers, and listened attentively to Rosendo, who said:

"That forest is a cursed, dangerous place. . . . There are wild animals, wild Indians, fevers, and, what's more, you can't even call your soul your own."

It was not the first time Rosendo Maqui had met men resolutely setting out for the jungle, but what he had never met were those who should have returned, triumphant and rich. Nevertheless, people went. And the myth of the fortunes to be made ran like wildfire from one end of the uplands to the other. The poor who were tired of their poverty, and the rich who wanted to become richer, prepared their saddlebags, got a gun, and away they went. Some in parties, others alone. But either way, they reached the trochas, those tunnels cut through the labyrinth of trees, and there they were swallowed up in the greenish black abyss.

Rosendo turned toward Augusto and looked at him, trying to tell him something. Not a word did he say, but it was plain that he was reproaching him for his excessive interest, the eager surprise that was beginning to lure him away. And the boy grew sad and felt as though he had done something wrong; it almost seemed that he had already left the community and they were all reproaching him. The jungle! This was his first contact with that distant, dramatic reality of the jungle.

The villagers continued their journey, and their route, having grown weary of the sameness of the plateau, wandered away from the main road in search of new adventures down the hillside. But the slope was easy and wound down in gentle curves, for they were approaching the town, and the authorities, on the occasion of a visit by the archbishop and another by the chief of police, had done something to keep the surroundings from looking too wild. The slope ended beside a river, pleasantly shaded by gualangos, and the road followed one of the banks upstream. It was a pleasant road, the chill was out of the air, and a breeze blew through the thick high tops of the gualangos, which cast circles of shadow as they screened the blaze of the sun which was undisputed master of the wide blue skies. The river sang its same old gay traveling song, as it ran along over fine sand and purple and yellow pebbles. Horses and riders went along contentedly too. Augusto, who had forgotten his silent scolding, began a song which was always on his lips:

O, love,

little love,

If you are true come to me!

I wander all alone through the world

And nobody knows of me.

It seemed to Augusto that the river was singing with him. It is easy to believe this when one sings alongside a river.

Little dove with white wings,

Generous little dove,

Tell me where your nest is,

For I am seeking shelter.

Rosendo listened intently, as did Goyo Auca and Abram. The melody brought back their youth, that beautiful time when they, too, sang of their love, and it filled them with pleasure.

The dark night is already falling.

If I go I will fall.

Give me, give me lodging

And at your side I will sleep.

The road turned, and beyond a rise lay the town. It seemed close at hand, with its red roofs, its white and yellow walls, and the houses clustered around the stalwart, square-towered church as though seeking protection. The surroundings were green with trees and alfalfa fields. In the almost deserted streets, a quiet hum spoke of activity within. At the sound of the horses' hoofs clattering on the cobblestones, the bored shopkeepers went to their doors to see what was going on. The ponchos of the Indians, with the exception of Rosendo's, which was dark, splashed the brightness of their colors against the light walls.

"They're community Indians."

"The old fellow is the famous Mayor Rosendo Maqui."

"They're pretty independent."

"But I understand that Don Amenabar is going to make them reef in their sails . . . So I've heard."

"What's that you say?"

"Just that. There's going to be a lawsuit."

"Go on, tell me all about it."

And rumors and speculations ran rife.

The riders turned up one side of the square past the courthouse. The square was a wide, lonely expanse, paved with stones of different sizes, between which the grass grew freely. In the middle was a fountain where several women, probably servants of the wealthy, were filling their water jars. Two of them were talking to an Indian who sat on the low stone coping of the fountain, watching his thin, poorly outfitted horse as it nibbled hungrily at the grass. The church

was closed, and on one of the towers stood a tin weathercock, always on the point of crowing. Most of the houses that surrounded the square were two-storied, and some were stores displaying the bright goods and the shining tools that the Indians come to buy at the regular Sunday fairs. The storekeepers were serving liquor to their daily customers. At the door of the courthouse the policemen supplied the official note to be found in all provincial capitals with their ugly, yellow-fringed, blue uniforms. Because of its rank, the town had not only a subprefect but authorities with such high-sounding titles as Judge of the Court of First Instance, Military Governor, Public Health Officer, School Commissioner, and others.

These diligent functionaries rarely functioned and they spent their time passing on to their inferiors or superiors harmless communications. What were they to do? The judge was buried from sight behind mountains of stamped paper, which is the product of the love of justice that characterizes the Peruvians. But overwhelmed by the mere sight of the sheaves of paper and judging it a superhuman effort to explore the endless articles, inserts, claims, protests, and "whereases," he had given up all hope of ever getting through the briefs. He blamed his delay on the minute analyses his just decisions involved.

"I am studying the matter, giving it my careful attention."

The subprefect almost never had to suppress disorders—the Indians were more docile every day—and it did not take him over an hour each morning to impose fines and collect jail charges. The duties of the others were not so heavy. The conscripts for military services were all drafted at one time; there were no medicines with which to fight epidemics or vaccinate against them; there were no supplies for the schools, and the teachers were as ignorant as they were unremovable, for they owed their appointment to political influence. So what were they to do? Besides, deep wisdom underlay their lack of activity. They firmly believed the well-known adage: In Peru things get done by themselves. Only once in a while, when some rich man or politician needed their services, did they display any unusual activity.

The cavalcade stopped before the house of Bismarck Ruiz. His office, which opened onto the street, was closed, so the villagers went into the hall of the house. A woman came out carrying a baby over her shoulder. Her deep-circled eyes and drawn face showed traces of tears.

"What?" she asked. "What? You are asking for Bismarck? You come to his house to ask for him? What an idea!"

Her voice was shrill and angry. The villagers looked at one another, unable to understand why it should seem such a foolish thing to look for Bismarck Ruiz at his house. The woman, noticing their bewilderment, went on to explain:

"That man stays at La Costeña's. He's there all the time and I know the wicked creature has bewitched him. Oh, the faithless one. He almost never comes home. To leave his children like this, poor helpless babies."

They weren't all babies, for at that moment a tall son appeared who acted as his father's secretary. He was undoubtedly a cockfight enthusiast for he had a red rooster in his arms, and was fastening to his legs a pair of spurs that he had carefully sharpened. The bright darts that were to be plunged into the eyes or any part of a rival's head gleamed menacingly. When he recognized Rosendo, he set the bird carefully on the floor—it was a blooded animal, the comb cut short, the beak thick, and the claws broad—and offered to conduct them to his father.

And it was in the house of La Costeña that they found Bismarck Ruiz. They entered a flagged hallway that opened onto a courtyard where carnations, violets, and jasmine bloomed. In each corner a dwarf orange tree showed its round, green head.

On the other side was the living room. At the moment there were a great many people there, and the sound of laughter, songs, and the merry strumming of guitars could be heard. The villagers dismounted, and their "juridical defender" led them to the door of the living room with embraces and loud exclamations of delight.

"Oh, my friends, what a pleasure to see you here. First of all I must tell you that the matter in which you are interested is going along very well, very well, indeed. Come in, come in, and have a drink and take part in the fun."

When they reached the door he called to his boon companions and a woman whom he addressed as Melbita, and who was also known as La Costena. She looked at the Indians with condescending aloofness. She was tall and fair, rather stout, with eyes shaded by long lashes and a full red mouth. She wore a dress of green silk, all tucks and trimming, which fitted tightly over her breast and was cut low showing her delicate skin.

Melba Cortez had come to the town from a place on the coast, some

years back. She was slender and pale, and choked back her cough with a little lace handkerchief which afterward showed red stains on its folds. At first her life went by dully—her social life, that is to say, for her physical state improved in the high, dry, sunny climate. After a while she was well enough to go to parties and at the parties she made friends. She had grown beautiful and had hosts of admirers. It was rumored that she was friendly with the judge, but those who said this were mistaken, for the one she really was on intimate terms with was young Urbina, the son of a rich landowner in Terpan. But, on the other hand, the storekeeper Caceda seemed to be very thick with her, and who knows if it wasn't the alderman Ramirez she was in love with, for she danced with him all one night. At the same time, the lucky one might be Lieutenant Calderon, at whom she smiled in a very special way, or perhaps the law student Ramos, who was with her so much during his vacation, though didn't her best friends, the Pimentel girls, say that the one she liked best of all was the notary Mendez? In a word, Melba Cortez had caused a real flutter in the town.

Naturally, this coquetting aroused the vehement indignation of all the modest, conventional wives and young ladies, who, fearful of the effect of such shameful, immoral, wicked behavior on the good old-fashioned customs, proceeded to repudiate and ostracize so shocking an example. The few friends she had, among them the wild, badly brought-up Pimentel girls who "had never been any better than they should," ran the risk of being treated the same way and having the finger of scorn pointed at them. To make the ostracism more complete, and to avoid any possible confusion between her and the well-bred ladies of the town, they referred to her as "La Costena," indicating that she came from a place where habits were loose. Oh, those formidable, upright matrons!

The truth is that what Melba Cortez was trying to do was to find some way of getting along; for her family, far away and poor, could send her very little, and she had to live on the bounty of the few women who would have anything to do with her. She flirted with her many admirers in the hope that something tangible might develop. It never occurred to her that, almost overnight, she was going to be cast-off and treated as a menace to society. Some of her suitors withdrew, and others persisted in the hope of an affair. She had become a fallen woman. And each day her poverty increased and her ostracism steadily widened. She wept to herself with rage and humiliation, and since the doctor forbade her to leave the climate of this town in the mountains, which had become like a prison to her, she decided she might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Since she hadn't been able to find a rich man, a well-fixed one would do. And they didn't

want scandals? Now they would get a real one.

At this moment Bismarck Ruiz appeared on the scene. She met him at a dinner to which the Pimentels had invited her in all good faith. The lawyer, in spite of his military name, was completely ignorant of tactics and strategy, and he advanced without maintaining contact with his rearguard, until there came a moment when he could not retreat. He got himself hopelessly involved with La Costena. He dressed her and bejeweled her; he bought her this house, and, although he did not altogether leave his own home, he spent most of his time with her; he gave parties which the Pimentels and other not-too-strait-laced young ladies attended. The men, turning a deaf ear to their wives' upbraidings, had a wonderful time at these entertainments. The matrons raged with indignation. They went so far as to ask to have her expelled from the town, but the authorities paid no attention to them. They were men of the world and they saw no cause for alarm. Besides, they never missed one of these parties.

"Here are my best clients," said the lawyer. "They are the villagers of Rumi, hard-working honorable men against whom an iniquitous robbery is being plotted."

In the living room several couples were dancing a slow, native waltz. Two guitarists were playing and singing in a loud, high voice:

He leaves a memory of love

To all the human race;

In Italian territory

Was where Chavez fell.

The song referred to the aviator, Jorge Chavez, who, flying a light machine, had crossed the Alps for the first time in the history of aviation. After he had accomplished this exploit and was about to land at Domodosela his machine crashed and he was killed. The event caught the popular fancy of those who heard about it, and they expressed their sorrow and admiration in their own ingenuous verses:

All alone and in his aeroplane

He crossed the Alps;

And the universe was astounded

By the bravery of this Peruvian.

The singers were two swarthy half-breeds whose coarse hands twanged the guitar heavily. The strings thrummed and shrilled, as though they were about to snap. The couples danced without making any turns, with a clearly marked, simple step. This was the Peruvian version of the waltz, which had become as creole as the music and the rhythm.

He has added to his country's greatness,

This valiant aviator;

And the Peruvians remember him

With a spirit of pride.

The villagers did not catch all the words and could not quite understand the song.

"You hear?" Bismarck Ruiz said to them. "That's the great Jorge Chavez. He flew over the Alps, you understand, the twenty-third of September, 1910, less than two years ago. It's men like him that make a country."

It must be true if Don Bismarck said so. They thought to themselves humbly: how ignorant we are; all we are good for is to till the land, doing our task each day. Thus they did their duty, as best they knew how, but maybe, maybe, they thought, one ought to fly over the Alps. . . .

"Bring out beer for my clients," shouted the lawyer, and his friends smiled, and even Melba Cortez smiled a little. They brought out the beer in big glasses crowned with foam. Abram and his son declined. Rosendo and Goyo Auca politely drank theirs.

The mayor, feeling that he had listened long enough, asked the lawyer about the matter of the trial. Ruiz led them into a nearby room:

"It's a pity that just now . . . with this party going on . . . not the best moment to deal with such weighty matters. . . ."

The lawyer wore a greenish suit, heavy rings on his fingers, and across his stomach, from one vest pocket to another, stretched a chain of gold. His eyes were bleary with drink and he reeked of brandy as though he had been soaked in it. He half-closed the door as they went

into the room.

"To be brief, that Amenabar is filing claim to the lands of the community as far as the ravine of Rumi; he says they are his. Did you ever hear of such insolence? But I have submitted the deeds, with a good pleading, and now he doesn't know what to do. His lawyer is that imbecile Araña, and so far he hasn't even attempted to answer. Let him answer whenever he likes, I'll settle his hash with another pleading . . . Who does he think he is? I am Bismarck, like that other great man. Do you know who Bismarck was?"

The villagers said they did not, and wondered, to themselves, whether he had flown too. But since the lawyer lacked further information about his namesake, they never found out.

"Yes, indeed, Rosendo Maqui, you can set your mind at rest. Right here in this brain"—he touched his bald spot—"there's lots of gray matter. I've knocked Araña out every time I've met him . . . Don't worry at all. Come back in a month, for they're probably waiting for the expiration of the time limit before they answer . . . By the way, Maqui, could you let me have fifty soles?"

Rosendo gave him the money and Ruiz walked with them to their horses. As they were leaving, he said once more:

"Now, remember, don't worry. There is nothing for you to be uneasy about. The case is clear, the right is on your side, and I know how to handle those thieves. They keep harping on the matter of proofs. Who doesn't know that those lands belong to the community? No doubt about your rights being upheld. So don't worry."

The villagers rode over to a little inn nearby to get a bite to eat and feed the horses. There was a girl there waiting on the table who made a great impression on Augusto. It didn't seem possible that there could be so many pretty girls in the world. The only trouble was that Maqui was ready to leave too soon.

On the way home Rosendo and his company kept thinking over the lawyer's words. Of course he was right. If it came to that, the whole town of Muncha and the many travelers who came through Rumi would testify that the land had belonged to them from time immemorial, that there was no question about their rights. . . .

The trip was tiring, especially for the old man. Night overtook them when they were only halfway across the highlands. Fortunately it was good weather, for during the rainy season quagmires form which often

swallow up horse and rider. A sharp, buffeting wind whistled dolefully through the sedges. Rosendo felt the jolt of the horse's hoofs in his brain and his back ached with weariness.

Fatigue always makes the journey home seem longer. But as they started down the last slope they saw afar the friendly lights of the village, glimmering sweetly in the darkness. This sight cheered them and gave them new strength. There were their homes, their land, everything that was their life and their happiness . . . They forgot their weariness, and even the horses, in spite of the brambles, quickened their pace.

Augusto got up early to give a hand with the milking. It was not really his job, but he suddenly felt very industrious. He was trying to find a good excuse for helping when he saw Inocencio the cowherd struggling with one of the cows.

"Hey, Inocencio, want me to help you?" he said as he came over.

The cow was already tied to the hitching rail, but she had to be hobbled.

"She's just dropped her first calf," Inocencio explained, "and she won't let herself be milked. She's already broken one pitcher. They're like this till they get used to it."

Fragments of the pitcher could be seen in the milky puddle on the ground. To Augusto's surprise, the girls who were waiting to milk were not the same ones he had seen the day before. It was a new shift. Marguicha was there with another girl whom Augusto didn't even notice. But he was glad to look at Marguicha—Marguicha with her blooming lips and cheeks, her breasts like young fruits, and a body that promised the fecundity of the earth, and her black eyes . . . And so he helped hobble the cow, and drove in the others, and fastened up the calves, and handed out pitchers and buckets, and was most attentive and helpful about everything. Every once in a while he said a word to Marguicha and she answered him with a swift merry glance, and Augusto's hopes began to soar. When Marguicha passed by—O, love, love—the very stones trembled.

Augusto came back the next morning and the next. He knew many songs, and while the milk gushed out in thick streams he sang them

softly. Marguicha had never heard them and she wondered if Augusto made them up himself, for they seemed to have a certain bearing on their situation.

O eyes, dear black eyes,

Little cherry eyes,

Don't go away among the hills!

Look at me!

Inocencio, who was a quiet, dull sort of person, did not notice what was going on for several days. He was very kind, and, in spite of the difference in their ages, he and Augusto had become friends. So one day he questioned him. The lad, like everyone who has ever been in love, was delighted to be able to talk about it, and half joking, half in earnest, told him everything. And he also told him how of late he had been crazy about every girl he saw, and that he had come out to the barnyard thinking he was going to see one of the girls who had offered them the fresh milk, and it was Marguicha instead. And the truth of the matter was that it was Marguicha he had always been seeking in all the others. He was in love with her. He had found in Marguicha the woman he had been looking for.

The cowherd and Augusto had stood there talking in the barn lot. Marguicha and the other girl had gone, each carrying a pitcher on her head and a pail half full in her hand. Morning was coming up over Rumi. The calves were sucking, butting their heads against the udder, "calling" the milk. There was a smell of sun-warmed dung.

Inocencio laughed good-naturedly and began to philosophize, illustrating his ideas with practical examples.

"Now, women are like doves in the woods. You take your gun and you go to the woods and you see a big flock of doves and you don't know which to shoot. Of course, the one who is a good hunter or has his gun well primed kills several. But take for instance the fellow that only kills one. He takes careful aim so as not to miss. Sometimes, just as he's going to fire, the dove hops away and hides in the leaves. Or it may happen that another one lights right on the spot where he was aiming and, bang, that's the one he brings down instead of the one he aimed at. See? It's the same with women. You saw a lot of women, you came for one and got another . . . You can't really say you found the one you were looking for. I tell you, women are just like doves in the woods."

By the time Inocencio had finished his rambling parable, Augusto had a cross, exasperated expression. What did the fool mean with his idiotic babbling? Was he so dumb he couldn't understand? Did he mean that Marguicha was like any other woman? Or that he could have loved anybody else the way he loved her? No doubt about it, Inocencio was stupid. Without answering him, Augusto walked away, refusing to waste any more words on such a clod.

Inocencio smiled, and cracking his whip he drove the cows out to pasture. He was not offended by Augusto's disdain; rather, he accepted it benevolently.

"Oh, young folks, young folks . . . oh, cows, cows," he said to himself, swinging the whip without hitting any of them, as was his custom. Inocencio was very patient with animals as well as people. In general, patience is a virtue of the drovers and herders of the Andes. If they don't have it to begin with, they have to acquire it, and plenty of it, to drive their teams or their flocks and not fall into despair at the hardships of that land without inns, without shelters, without roads, or roads without bridges or fences, that go through wilderness and forest, over rivers, rocks . . . Inocencio had grown up herding cattle and he knew how to have patience.

"Oh, young folks, young folks . . . oh, cows, cows."

But, putting aside all parables, there were villagers who were shooting the doves. They were the disciples of the now legendary Abdon.

The guns barked and the hunted birds fluttered up and down the gulch of Rumi and Lombriz Creek. With each little puff of smoke one or two birds fell, and the rest rose up in a blue, swift, desperate flight. They nearly always settled in a certain tree that served them as an observation point. When the fall of the victims drove them away from this, they went to another. The hunters came to know their habits. And the doves learned theirs too. The moment they spied a man walking along slowly, or even carrying a stick in his hand, they flew away. Then the hunters—not for nothing were they men and able to think—hid at the foot of the trees toward which the birds were flying. The moment they got there a shot rang out, and several fell. The flight began once more with a terrified fluttering and bewildered circling to meet another shot, and there were new victims a little farther off.

In order not to frighten them away altogether the hunters let them feed on the berries in the morning. It was in the afternoon that they hunted them, and the birds could not feed, much less sing.

Many of the villagers felt sorry for the birds and others missed their singing. The one who missed it most of all was Demetrio Sumallacta, the flute player. He was entranced by the sweet melody, and he listened for it every day, especially at evening. It seemed to him that the song was like another color added to the twilight. It was as if the colors and the notes blended together. There were moments when it seemed to him that the twilight was magically colored with music, and again, that the song was color set to music. He came back to himself again only with the darkness.

Demetrio, at times, seemed to hear a faint, mournful, distant song. It was that of his own heart.

Nasha Suro, black of dress and reputation, suddenly appeared one day before Rosendo. It was getting dark and it seemed to the mayor that the darkness had spawned her.

“Taita, taita,” she said in a whining voice, her dark face a mask of fear, “I have asked the coca. The basket falls from the rosewood stick whenever the lands of the community are mentioned. That is bad, taita. . . .”

Rosendo, for the moment, did not know what to say. As he thought about it he began to be suspicious, or at least doubtful, about Bismarck Ruiz’s arrogant assurance.

“That’s not all, taita,” went on Nasha, mysteriously. “I have asked the coca in other ways, and its answer is always bad . . . bitter, too. . . .”

This was the augury that the wisewoman, also known as a witch, made about the suit with Umay Ranch, which was the chief topic of conversation in the village. Nasha liked to pass as a fortuneteller, and, knowing the human heart, what she did was to prophesy what people hoped or feared.

"We'll see, Nasha," answered Rosendo, sadly, making a mental note of the forebodings of his people. "We have a lawyer, and the matter is coming to trial. . . ."

Nasha faded away into the night muttering to herself. They may have been everyday words or they may have been magic charms.

The Magician made his regular appearance in the village. He arrived on a clumsy old nag, which was covered from head to tail with packs stuffed to bursting. The rider seemed like another bundle added to the load.

As was his usual custom he stopped at the house of Miguel Panta, which was well located for his purpose in the middle of the Calle Real across from the square.

Panta hospitably unsaddled the horse and led him out to pasture while the Magician, who was a peddler, began to open up his packs in the hallway.

The things that came out of them!

Flowered goods, white goods, straw hats, glasses, cheap rings and earrings, thread, harmonics, copies of Bertoldo, Bertoldino, and Cacaseno, and Napoleon's Oracle, knives, picks without handles, mufflers, shoes, white handkerchiefs, big red bandannas with figures of animals or bullfights, buttons, needles, and a host of other notions. It all made a bright spot of color.

The villagers gathered around to see all the wonders.

"Well, Don Contreras, what brings you here so soon? You should have waited till after the harvest."

The Magician smiled, showing his decayed teeth.

"Oh, I'll be back, friends, I'll be back . . . I like to come here where the people are nice and pay what they owe. . . ."

This was the kind of soft soap with which he used to flatter the vanity of the countryfolk.

"So, buy . . . Buy this piece of percale right now . . . I'm giving it away at eighty cents a yard. . . ."

The peddler was a tall, bony man about fifty years old, with a face as long and pale as a slice of suet, lightly shaded by a dark mustache and

some thin, shiny hairs on his cheeks that tried to be whiskers. His colorless lips were quick to smile a mechanical, professional smile, and his dirty, bony hands fingered bills and change with such dexterity that it seemed as though the money added itself up and made its own change while he talked to the customers, extolling his merchandise. A round-brimmed hat covered his small head, and a poncho hung on his thin, scarecrow-like body. His yellow pants wrinkled over skinny shanks to find their way into lusterless boots. But the most striking feature of the man was his eyes. They were the black, quick eyes of a bird, strangely piercing, and when they came to rest on an object they looked it over with the care of a policeman. The eyes gave him an energetic, resolute air; otherwise the Magician would have been like a ghost or a stick disguised as a man and about to be blown over by the wind. But it was only when he was selling his goods that the originality of the man could be fully appreciated.

"Here's a girl that would look fine in these earrings, and you, too, you've got pretty hands and these rings were just made for you . . . everybody admires a hand with a ring on it . . . only forty soles for the earrings . . . and only one sol for this fine silver ring."

The girls were afraid their mothers might scold them for paying too much. The Magician praised his merchandise still more loudly, tried the jewelry on the girls, calling on all the bystanders to admire them, then using their praise to reinforce his arguments. It was almost impossible not to buy, once he had managed to put his merchandise in a person's hands.

"Now you, Doña Chayo, ought to buy another pair of shoes. . . ."

Doña Chayo was testing with her fingers the shameless thinness of a piece of muslin for which he was asking fifty cents a yard.

"Shoes, he says. The others he sold me were rotten, and they wore out in no time."

"Oh, the rascal, the thief!" the bystanders commented boldly.

But the Magician showed no indignation; he was indifferent to such insults. On the contrary, he seemed to like them, and his professional smile grew brighter listening to them. At heart, he considered them a mark of honor, and he took them as a compliment to his ability as a shrewd, capable trader. Let them talk, let them talk! As long as he could put his goods into their hands . . . This world is for the shrewd, and if people let themselves be fooled, that's their own fault.

When he talked confidentially with Panta or any of his friends, the Magician used to lament the fact that, as his mother had died when he was a year old and he had been brought up by a drunken father, he had not been able to study medicine. He said it to impress them, because he had never cared much about studying.

Many years ago in his village, one of the many villages lost in the northern mountains, he was the leader of a band of young ruffians that became notorious. They raided gardens and laid them waste, indifferent to the charges of buckshot fired at them; they abused any horses they happened to come across in their wanderings, riding them bareback at breakneck speed; at night they changed the signs on the shops in the town so that in the morning the drugstore bore the undertaking establishment's sign and vice versa.

"They're a bad lot, those boys," said the people.

But none could equal Julio Contreras, for that was the Magician's name, at flying kites with bits of sharp glass tied to the tail to cut the strings of the other kites, or at using the slingshot. Dozens of gay rival kites sailed off God only knows where, and hundreds of sparrows and wild doves fell victim to his steady aim and his hawk eye.

All this mischief was, up to a point, traditional in the town, and would not have put anyone beyond the pale; but he always managed to give a certain malevolent twist to his pranks which finally brought about his departure. He had caught a dove whose wing had been broken by a stone from his sling. Instead of killing it, as any other boy would have done to keep the bird from suffering, he had a brilliant idea. He took it to school, and before classes began he tied his victim's feet together and put it within reach of the teacher's pampered cat. It was a sight to behold the shackled bird trying to get away, turning its head from side to side, fluttering its good wing, even trying to hop, but only managing to move its trembling little body convulsively. At this moment the teacher came in, and since she knew from experience that scolding was a waste of breath she sent the boy home from school with a note for his father, to which she requested an answer.

As a matter of fact, the father was a drunkard who thought about his son only when he received complaints from the teacher or the neighbors. Then he would give him a thrashing. On this occasion Julio Contreras, who was now twelve years old, did not give him the note

and left town.

He traveled about doing whatever he could. He even joined a company of third-rate acrobats, until the principal performer broke his neck in Chilete, and the company disbanded in Cajamarca after four performances before an empty house.

By this time Contreras had grown a great deal, both in size and tricks. With his small savings he bought a roulette wheel of the kind used at fairs, and he fixed it up in every way he knew to take in the unwary. He happened along with his wheel just as the fair in the District of San Marcos was at its height. The prizes he offered were buttons, stockings, spools of thread, pictures, almanacs—the latter he had picked up free at a drugstore—mirrors, and a cheap watch, which was always the bait, but, of course, never came up. He charged twenty cents a chance. The merrymakers were lured by the watch, they paid their money, and spun the pointer. It whirled and whirled and suddenly came to a stop pointing to an almanac advertising some kind of cure-all on its cover or to a card with half-a-dozen collar buttons. The owner of the wheel made money, but not as much as he wanted.

The fair was not having much success. There were only a few masked dancers in the square; the priest refused to let the procession march at night; the bulls for the bullfight were cowardly and would not attack, and the bullfighter, realizing that they were going to make him work with bulls who had been in fights before and knew all the tricks of the trade, cleared out overnight. And, to put the finishing touch on everything, the lieutenant of the squad of policemen that had just come from Cajamarca issued an order prohibiting the amateur bullfighters, who wanted to show off, from entering the rough fence of logs that served as a ring. The people howled at the governor, who was the master of ceremonies of the fair. "Miser! Penny pincher! Skinflint!" They alluded to the fact that he had not wanted to spend what was necessary. The lieutenant and his men dealt out saber blows to the noisiest of them. Thereupon Julio Contreras went to see the governor to lay an excellent idea before him.

"Sir," he said, "I'll save the situation for you. Let me use the Market Place and I'll give a performance. I know how, I have worked with a circus."

"Really," answered the governor, half eager, half suspicious.

Contreras showed him a program of a company of acrobats, on which his name appeared, and the governor's doubts were dissipated. They

arranged to have the performance the next night. The governor offered him a hundred soles, but finally agreed, in view of the exceptional importance of the artist, to allow him part of the gate receipts too. At this difficult moment, Contreras seemed a godsend to the governor. He announced the performance at once to get the people into a better humor, and the next morning he personally supervised the posting of big signs in the square. In great black letters they proclaimed that tonight, in the Market Place, the great magician, Julio Contreras, would appear. It went on to say that all the acts were magic: the magic tightrope, the magic leap, the magic flight. Someone, to give himself airs, said he had seen the magic flight, and it was really mysterious and terrifying. The news spread all through the town. Late in the afternoon Contreras went to see the governor:

"Listen, sir, these people are very exacting, and God only knows what they'll do to me if they don't like my act. Could you let me have the hundred soles now, so that I could send them on to my mother in case anything happens?"

The governor, who was half-drunk, was touched and gave him the hundred soles; but he was not so drunk nor so touched that his suspicions were not aroused. So he arranged with the lieutenant for a policeman to keep watch over Contreras.

The artist had thought of everything—he had two accomplices, one to sell tickets and the other to have a horse saddled for him at the rear exit from the square—but he had not foreseen the police surveillance.

Night came and the improvised theater was packed with people. And what an enthusiastic audience! Corn liquor and beer flowed like water. Some of them pulled out their revolvers and began shooting into the air. The trouble was that the air was a tin roof, and each shot made it reverberate deafeningly. The very drunk ones thought this was part of the act and applauded vigorously. Others yelled, "The Magician! The Magician!" at the top of their lungs.

Contreras, meanwhile, was sweating and panting, not knowing what to do. The policeman who had been detailed to watch him followed him like a shadow, even when he went onto the improvised stage that had been rigged up at the back of the building. At one end of the platform was the door behind which the horse would be waiting, but maybe nothing was going to work. The incomparable artist knew certain acrobatic tricks, and could walk the tightrope, and even turn a double back somersault. But the magic flight? There wasn't even any way that he could fake it. And this audience was capable of killing or

at least giving the now discouraged performer a good beating if it was not satisfied.

The lieutenant and his men, gathered around the door, looked like a bit of blue scum on the wave of people.

"The Magician! The Magician!"

Bullets kept whanging on the tin ceiling. One wag said:

"The doors of Heaven are falling," and was rewarded with a loud shout of laughter.

Contreras could not decide what to do. He had kept the policeman waiting a long time with one excuse and another. The ticket seller finally arrived with the money. There was nothing to do but go on with it. The die was cast. The artist even put on his tight-fitting red suit. He ordered the outer curtain of cheap cloth opened. He was about to do the magic flight, the most difficult feat of all his repertoire, he explained to the policeman, and he added, playing his last card:

"The way I get into the air is a secret. You'd better go out to see the act."

The policeman, only half-believing in the act but curious to see the possible flop, went and joined the audience. Under his arm he carried a bundle. It was Contreras' clothes. With his policeman's sagacity he thought that even if he should try to escape it would be easy to find him in his striking outfit.

"The Magician!" shouted someone, breaking the silence that had followed the opening of the curtain.

"The Magician!" others chorused.

The stage remained empty. The artist failed to appear. At last the policeman, grown suspicious, went to see what was wrong and found that Contreras had vanished into thin air. He really had made a magic flight.

And in the meantime Contreras was taking the strangest ride that those mountains of the north had ever seen. Dressed as he was in his acrobat's red suit, and staking all on one play, he put the money inside his breast, threw open the back door, and leaping to the horse's back, made his escape. He crossed through the streets like lightning, boldly

taking the first road into the darkness, and never stopped galloping even when the dawn came up. The early-rising country people who were driving their flocks to pasture or riding into town fled in terror or stood rooted in their tracks, thinking it was the Devil Himself they had seen go by—dressed in red like that and galloping like mad—pursuing some lost soul or making for one of those caverns that go down into the earth and communicate with the gloomy abyss of Hell.

For his part the policeman did not know what to do or what explanation to give, and when he went to the lieutenant to show him, as an excuse, the bundle of clothes he was still carrying, he received a slap and was put under arrest for two days. The audience had grown tired of waiting for the Magician, and went backstage to look for him. When they realized the trick that had been played on them, they broke everything that was breakable; they even tried to set fire to the building, and the police had great difficulty restraining them. Things looked so bad that the governor himself made a flight and stayed away for two weeks.

The rider continued his wild ride, sowing terror or stupefaction wherever he passed, until he finally reached the house of a friend who supplied him with the clothes he needed to move among people again.

And that is how Julio Contreras earned three hundred soles and a nickname. He had never seen so much money at one time, and with it he bought a stock of cheap merchandise and began his peddling business. He spent the rest of his life at it. People said he had money in a bank at Trujillo and every so often he went and made new deposits. He neither affirmed nor denied the rumor, but each year he said that he wouldn't be back any more.

But the Magician always returned on his plodding nag, which felt the weight of the bulging packs more than that of its master.

"This pick is pure steel and it cuts the ground like butter."

One of the dove hunters, who was passing by with his gun, stopped to see what was going on.

"Oh, that reminds me," exclaimed the Magician, glowing with satisfaction, "do you want to sell that gun? I need a good gun . . . I'll pay well."

The villager handed it to him and Contreras looked it over with the air of an expert.

"No, it's not what I wanted. A goatherd of Uyumi ordered it from me. The pumas are getting his goats and he needs a good gun and lead, too. He wants to make heavy bullets for the pumas. But perhaps he'd better come and see it himself. What's your name so I can tell him?"

"Jeronimo Cahua."

"Oh, all right . . . I hope he comes and you make a good deal with him. He wants it right away and he's willing to pay well. Who else has guns here that might do?"

Jeronimo and the other villagers told him the names of the few owners. Several, more officious, went to call them, and they came from their houses or the gulch where they were hunting, with their arms.

They were old muzzle-loading shotguns. The Magician rejected them, one after another. This one had too small a bore, that one was dented, the stock was loose on the other . . . No, they all had defects, but maybe the goatherd would come and take a look at them. Let me have your name.

Then he went on praising his wares and attending to his customers.

"No, I can't sell anything on time now because I'm going on a long trip, and it will be some time before I get back. Borrow the money from somebody here. Anybody will lend it to you. The mayor will guarantee it."

"Didn't you say you would soon be back?"

"That's what I say when they don't trust me."

You couldn't help laughing at Don Contreras.

Many men and women made their dreams of bright cloth and ornaments come true. And the Magician's sales went on until late in the afternoon.

The woman of the house prepared supper and Miguel Panta and his old friend ate together and then sat beside the fireplace talking until very late. The Magician knew the vast territory over which he traveled like his own back yard, and he had many stories to tell about far-off

towns, ranches, Indian farmers, communities, festivities . . . His own experiences furnished him with the material for many of his tales, and he gave them a dramatic note as he related them.

"Once I was in Piura in a place where there were lots of vipers. The thing that happened to me with a viper never happened to anybody else. The snake had crawled into my saddlebag, and there it was, riding up and down wherever I went, and I didn't even see it. What surprises me is that it wasn't crushed. Well, I was going to Cajamarca and as I crossed a very high range of mountains, my horse got tired and I stopped and took off the saddlebags to rest him, and out crawls the viper. Good Lord, I said to myself, how come it didn't bite me when I was putting things in or taking them out? It crawled along a little way and then went stiff, and then gave another little wriggle and stiffened out again. It had been overcome by the altitude, it had soroche. But I said to myself, let's see what happens. So I set fire to the grass around it, and when it had warmed up a bit, it began to crawl again. I didn't kill it because I knew it was going to die anyway. And now I ask, who ever saw a snake with mountain sickness? Nobody but me."

The years do not go by for nothing, especially if you spend them on the road, and the Magician was worn out. His shoulders sagged and he had deep furrows at the corners of his mouth. It was a long time now since the magic flight, several decades. On his lips the story acquired a flavor of old wine, and, as he told it, he sighed for his vanished youth.

The loveliest of all are the summer mornings, cool, blue, golden, especially if at the heart of them is a pretty girl like Marguicha. It makes one feel like getting up. Augusto Maqui kept on with his early rising. The milkmaid was on friendly terms with him. At times she asked for his help, and at others she gently gave him orders. Augusto smiled. But his relations with Inocencio were cool, or, to be more exact, non-existent. Augusto did not even speak to him and did all he could to ignore his presence. After two or three days of this behavior the patient herder called him to one side and said to him:

"You are behaving badly, Augusto. The least you can do is respect your elders. I am not as stupid as you think, and I understand a thing or two: you are a boy, she is a girl, I don't say a word. But you can show respect. I suppose you'll ask what authority have I got. All right, I haven't any. But I am the boss of these cows and this barnyard ...

This is where I have authority ... And I could tell you I don't need you here and not to come back any more. Now you understand. ..."

Augusto understood, he tried to apologize, and in time he even grew fond of the frank, simple cowherd. They became good friends and milking was a pure delight. And from the milk, the wheat swaying in the distance, the large eyes of the cows, the hands of Marguicha, the sun-warmed dung, the songs of the birds, and the all-embracing heart of the earth—from all these came new and beautiful songs. Augusto tried to teach good Inocencio a huaino that he liked very much. But Inocencio had no ear for music, and he was never able to learn certain parts of the song.

The doves, tired of flying about and dying, left as they did each year. They would be back the next year, like every other year, either because they had forgotten the bad treatment they had received or because they were new flocks.

Demetrio Sumallacta, the flute player, was very sad when the doves left, and he was very angry with the hunters, especially Jeronimo Cahua, the most persistent of the lot. He felt like beating him, but he was afraid he might not be able to control himself, and as Cahua was a roofer they needed his help to put the roof on the school. The straight yellow walls were ready. Besides, the mayor and the selectmen would make him pay damages and fine him for the benefit of the community. They might even expel him from it if they could find no good reason for the beating. And who knows but what the judge in town, to get money out of him, might even have him arrested for assault and battery ... And if the subprefect found out about it, he'd clap him in jail to collect jail charges ... But it certainly was a shame not to be able to beat the tar out of one of those devils.

Then his hopes revived. Since the shooting had stopped, the doves would come back. He waited all the next morning. But no flock hovered above the unicales and they could not even be seen in the distance. They had gone away. No more would their sweet melodious song be heard.

Then he remembered his flute and he had a great longing to play it. He looked for it on the shelf where he kept it, but he found only his shepherd's pipes. One of his younger brothers must have taken it. They were all afraid of Demetrio, for he was not only older, but he

was strong and had a hot temper. He had a morose expression and an ungainly air, and the girls made remarks about him.

"Isn't that Demetrio ugly!"

"But he plays so beautifully."

Demetrio looked everywhere for his flute, and when he had lost all hope of finding it, he saw it lying beside the ditch that ran in front of his house. It was split and swollen at the end with the dampness. He didn't even blow into it, to spare himself the suffering of hearing its hoarse groan. He was going to hit his brothers but he saw his mother looking at him. Then he flung the flute at the ceiling and ran out of the house. He could hear his brothers trying to keep back their laughter ... As he threw the flute from him, the air whistled through it, and that had made them laugh.

There were leafy elder trees growing green on both sides of the fields, covered thick with clusters of round, dark berries. The shining blackbirds flew among them eating the berries. Their song was not to be compared with that of the doves, but now that these had left it took on importance. Demetrio listened to it with pleasure, and the day seemed to be getting better. Now here was a piece of luck. Up on an elder tree he saw a dry branch, and this would save him the trouble of cutting green ones and waiting several days for them to dry. Besides, flutes made of branches that had dried on the tree were always better.

So he cut off the branch with a knife he had bought from the Magician some time ago. Right there he peeled it and cut it to the size of a good flute, cutting one end in a special shape. Then with a stick he pushed out the pithy heart, which was soft and came away easily. He lost all notion of time as he worked with the fragile branch. Next he fashioned the mouthpiece which had to fit exactly in the hollow reed; leaving a little space for the air to pass through. Then he fitted it in, leaving a shallow, smooth little groove. As the air passed through this it produced the music. He blew doubtfully into it, and the sound came out clear, sweet and high. It was a good flute. He would have gone to his house, for he had a piece of iron there he could use, but he did not want to see those rascals of his younger brothers, so he went to Evaristo's house. The blacksmith laid an awl on the glowing coals of a hand forge. When the metal was red hot they made the holes with it, four on top, and one below for the thumb. And Evaristo gave him a piece of sandpaper to polish the instrument. Then he blew to test it, and the notes sounded true as he uncovered each opening. It was a beautiful thing to see, long, slightly curved, as a flute of quality should

be. Demetrio was happy. When he asked the blacksmith how much he owed him, he would not charge him anything, and added by way of explanation:

"I like your music."

It was now evening, and Evaristo asked him to stay to supper. They ate, and then the flute player left without saying whether he was going to play or not. He had been very quiet during the meal, and Evaristo offered him a drink to see if it would cheer him up a bit, but Demetrio refused. So the blacksmith smilingly drank a double portion, saying he had to drink for both of them. A country joke.

Demetrio wandered away from the village into the fields. He walked around the cornfield, listening to the harsh, solemn music of the withered leaves blown about by the wind, and then past the wheat, where he heard the penetrating crackling that sounded in the night like the fine strings of a piano. He climbed a little, and he could see the thick wooded shadow of the gorge, a darkness that held the lament of the dead birds. In the town the red fires were dying down to a glimmer while in the sky the stars were coming out. A little later the new moon appeared, white and curved like the new flute.

Demetrio sat down on a knoll and said to himself, "What shall I play?" Now that he had the flute, he did not know what to play. All the yaravies, tonadas, huainos, and cashuas that he learned seemed so out of place. His heart would know. He began to play gently, softly, vaguely at first, and then the melody arose, or rather, the voice of the flute, and, in the village, those who had not yet gone to sleep stayed awake, and those who were asleep perhaps began to dream. The listeners said to one another in the darkness of their rooms:

"You hear? It must be Demetrio."

"It sounds as though it were singing and weeping."

His mother, who was still awake, roused her husband and said:

"Even if I didn't know who was playing, I would always say it was him, nobody but him."

The voice grew louder, it rose clear and high, powerful and sad at the same time, carrying in its note something like a hymn to the fruitful earth and a lament for the persecuted birds. A solitary night dove had begun to sing. But no, there were tears in this melody, human sobs in the unbroken long-drawn notes, carried on the wind. But now the first

rhythms had returned, now it grew calm with the placidness of the fecund earth, now it took on serenity from the undying existence that passes from root to seed.

At times it seemed as though the flute player were walking up and down or had stopped playing, but it was only that the wind shifted or grew stronger. The music returned, born anew, and spread like poured-out water; and everything seemed to be listening, and the little moon tried to see the player, alone on the hillside, alone and accompanied by all the boundless night.

And so until very late. When Demetrio Sumallacta reached his house he was blissfully happy. His mother had been waiting for him, and when she heard him get into bed a tear rolled down her face. Not a word was spoken and a beautiful silence filled with music settled over the night.

Leandro Mayta, brother of the master mason, was getting over the malaria he had caught on a trip to the Mangos River for coca. Some said he owed his recovery to the quinine, others, to the potions Nasha Suro brewed him.

The villager Romulo Quinto and his wife, Jacinta, had a boy. Until feasttime, when the priest, Father Mestas, would come and baptize him, they baptized him provisionally themselves and called him Simon.

Days come, days go...

Thus time went by for the villagers of Rumi.

Thus the vegetable, animal, and human events succeeded one another to form the lives of these children of the soil. If it had not been for the danger of Umay, hanging over them like a mid-summer storm over the ripened harvest, their trusting love in the earth and its gifts would have given complete meaning to their existence.

4

El Fiero Vasquez

One day, in the afternoon, a rider appeared trotting down the main street of Rumi on a handsome black horse. The horse's outfit was silver-studded, and the man seemed to blend with the glossy blackness of his horse in the large black vicuna poncho that floated heavily in the wind. A felt hat, black, too, and pulled down to the brows of his brown face, completed the mass of shining darkness. The man rode all the way down the street and, pulling up his horse smartly, stopped in front of Doroteo Quispe's house. At the sound of the horse's snorting and the clinking of spurs, the master of the house came out.

"Oh, come in, Vasquez, come in."

The rider had dismounted already and, as he said a few words with a satisfied air, he unfastened the halter tied to the pommel of the saddle. He was broad, strong, calm, and powerful in his movements. His boots left their imprint on the ground. He unfastened his saddlebag, threw it over his shoulder, and walked into the hall.

The news spread through the village, with a special note of seriousness and excitement.

"Fiero Vasquez has come. Fiero Vasquez has arrived."

Juanacha carried the news to the mayor's house.

Rosendo Maqui, who was sitting at the door with Anselmo and the dog Candela, answered:

"Let him come. . . ."

Naturally he had answered the same way many times, and Fiero Vasquez came to Rumi whenever he felt like it; but it pleased Juanacha's and the village's love of excitement to bandy the news around.

"Fiero Vasquez has come. Fiero Vasquez is here."

It might as well be known—Fiero Vasquez was a bandit. One of the many peculiarities that characterized this strange personality was the fact that his nickname—which by long usage had become his name—did not come from his fierce fighting qualities, great as these were, but from his pock-marked face. Fiero is a nickname which is given in the northern highlands of Peru to those whose faces are pitted by smallpox. In addition to these scars, he had other deeper ones on one side of his face from a shotgun wound. His love of black was another of his characteristics. His horse, his poncho, and his hat were all this color. His boots and saddlebags were the same; and if his clothes were not always black, they were at least dark. He appreciated quality, and all his belongings, including his horse, were of the finest. He ordered his vicuña ponchos from the south because they were scarce in the north. His friends said to him:

"Stop using black. It gives you away. . . ."

And he answered, indifferently:

"What do I care? My life is black, my sufferings are black, my fate is black. . . ."

He passed like a shadow along the roads or through the yellow fields of the Andean steppes. His dark face, with its large mouth, blunt nose, and prominent jaw, would have been that of the typical half-breed if it had not been for the pockmarks and the ugly gunshot wound. Besides being marred and rough from the scars, his face was made sinister by the fact that he had a white film over one eye. A wide smile, revealing strong white teeth, took away from his ugliness, and his resolute air commanded respect. All in all, there was a certain balance between the qualities and defects of Fiero Vasquez and he was not a repulsive figure. The aureole that surrounded him, and his fine voice, did the rest, and the bandit aroused admiration, not to say fear, among men, and interest and love among women. There were plenty of girls in the poor sections of the towns or farms scattered about the sierra who had lost their hearts to him. He belonged to that family of romantic highwaymen which reached its zenith in Luis Pardo and which is disappearing with the increase of travel on the roads and the activity of state mounted police.

Luis Pardo is a bandit

To whom life is of little worth.

Since they killed his father

He knows that his will be short.

The yaravi that laments Luis Pardo's misfortunes and relates his exploits was known from one end to the other of the highlands, had gone as far as the coast, and had even reached the jungle. His specialty was robbing the rich to give to the poor. To tell the truth, although Fiero Vasquez spent money freely wherever he went, he was not so philanthropic as Pardo. He always robbed the rich, but when he was hard pressed, he robbed the poor too. That was how he came to know Doroteo Quispe.

It happened that Doroteo was riding his donkey to the capital of the province once, carrying in his saddlebag a hundred soles which Rosendo had given him to buy candles, firecrackers, Roman candles, pinwheels, balloons, and other things that were needed for the feast of Saint Isidore which was at hand. The mayor had warned him to be very careful that the firecrackers didn't rub against one another in the saddlebag, and especially the pinwheels, for they might explode and blow up everything and kill the donkey, as had once happened. Doroteo was intent on doing his errand well and happy to be serving Saint Isidore.

When he was in the midst of the steppe, surrounded by empty fields and lonely hills, he saw in the distance a sinister black shape approaching . . . Fiero Vasquez! His blood froze in his veins and he whipped on his donkey in the hope of being able to hide somewhere and not be seen. Hidden with his donkey in a little hollow he began to recite the prayer of the Righteous Judge, which he had learned with great devotion and effort and was now using for the first time. But the bandit was coming straight toward him. He heard the approaching gallop, and then horse and rider, filling the sky with their blackness, appeared on a rise in the land from which the hollow was plainly visible. Fiero carried a shotgun across his saddle, and his flung-back poncho revealed pearl-handled revolvers at both sides of his belt. Doroteo had only a knife and the prayer of the Righteous Judge as arms.

"Come out of there, you stupid Indian," shouted the bandit gruffly.

Doroteo came out tugging at the donkey, which was balking and pulling back on the rope. He had just finished his prayer as he came alongside the highwayman.

"All right, let's have the money."

"I haven't got any, taita, I haven't got any," answered Doroteo, assuming a stupid expression, "only four reales," and he pulled them out of his pocket.

The bandit looked sternly at him.

"Where are you going?"

"Just to town to buy a little salt."

"So to buy four reales' worth of salt you need to take along the burro? Hand over the money, and thank your lucky stars that I don't feel like killing a poor Indian."

To show that he meant business he gave Doroteo a crack with the reins and hit the saddlebag which hung from his shoulder. The money clinked and Fiero Vasquez let out a loud laugh. The brown face of the Indian turned the color of ashes and he trembled as he handed over the saddlebag. Vasquez counted the money as he put it into his pocket.

"A hundred soles," he said admiringly, as he handed back the saddlebag. "Where did you get this much money?"

Doroteo Quispe told him that the money belonged to the community and was to buy things for Saint Isidore's feast. And he added, very solemnly, that the truth of the matter was that this money did not belong to the community any more but to Saint Isidore. Without saying it in so many words, he implied that this robbery was a sacrilege. Fiero Vasquez understood his meaning and laughed as he replied:

"Oh, so you're trying to scare me with Saint Isidore. The communities have plenty of money and I'm not robbing Saint Isidore but the community. Go home and tell them they'll have to give you another hundred soles."

He started off; then he thought better of it and turned back to Doroteo:

"If I let you go, you'll hurry to the town which is nearby and notify the authorities. It's better for you to ride along a few miles with me. Come on. . . ."

Doroteo walked ahead of the rider, urging on his donkey.

"Where is he taking me?" he asked himself. "Maybe he wants to take me somewhere and kill me." And he kept muttering to himself the prayer of the Righteous Judge.

Fiero Vasquez began to talk to him:

"You know, I can't figure out why I haven't put a bullet through you. You deserve it for a sly, insolent liar, trying to fool me. Think of it, me! And I'm asking myself right this moment why I'm going to the trouble of taking you away, when I could finish you off here once and for all."

Doroteo fervently kept on with the Righteous Judge.

"What is that you are muttering to yourself? Be careful, you insolent Indian."

He touched his horse with the spurs and caught up with Doroteo. The latter told him he was not cursing or insulting him or saying anything bad, that all he was doing was reciting the Righteous Judge and that it was surely because of this blessed prayer that Vasquez had not killed him.

"So that's it," exclaimed Vasquez. He dismounted and ordered Doroteo to say the whole prayer out loud. When he had heard it the bandit said:

"It sounds as though you did know it. I never thought it was any good, but it certainly has been useful to you, for, honestly, I can't understand why I didn't shoot you for your insolence. I think it must be good, and I'd like to learn it. Sometimes one needs a thing like that."

He suddenly became amiable with Doroteo and invited him to have a drink from a bottle of brandy he had in his saddlebag. Then they sat down on the grass and shared a piece of roast meat which he took out of the saddlebag. If Doroteo had smoked he could have lighted a cigarette. And finally he gave him back his money, except for twenty soles. With one thing and another they became friends, and agreed that Fiero was to come to Rumi to learn the Righteous Judge. As they were getting ready to say good-bye, Vasquez took out ten more soles —"This is my own money"—for Doroteo to buy candles and light them to Saint Isidore in his name. He couldn't give him back the other ten, for he really needed them. And, as they were friends, he was going to give him this handkerchief with a knot tied in one corner. If anybody came out of those rocks along the road down to the town, all he had

to do was show them the handkerchief with the knot in it and he would be allowed to go his way unmolested. If, by any chance, that did not convince his assailant, he could cow him completely with the words "Fiero Saviour." But he must keep it all a secret.

As the highwayman said good-bye a broad white smile lighted up his face, and he went his way. Doroteo resumed his interrupted trip to the town and Fiero rode to hide himself and his horse behind some high boulders to wait for another traveler. As Quispe turned past one of the last ridges he could still make him out, huddled up and dark, in his ambush ...

The feast of Saint Isidore had passed and Doroteo Quispe had forgotten the incident when one day, as it was getting dark, the bandit appeared in Rumi inquiring for his friend. At first the people pretended that he was away, harvesting; but it happened that at that moment Doroteo stepped out of the door of his house, and, when he saw Vasquez, he went over to him. They greeted each other cordially and the villagers looked on, amazed at the strange friendship that seemed to exist between Doroteo Quispe, the good commonplace man they all knew, who prayed and sowed, and the sinister bandit, with his perilous life and his reputation as black as his looks. What was more, he walked with Quispe to his house and they both went in.

This visit was followed by others to the end that Fiero Vasquez might learn by heart and without a single error the prayer of the Righteous Judge. It was very important to learn it perfectly, for if the person made a mistake the prayer lost a great deal of its power. But if he said it well, with faith and exactitude, it was so powerful that God had to hear it, whether He wanted to or not. After he had learned it Fiero Vasquez wanted to pay him, but Doroteo answered that he did not charge for teaching a prayer; if he wanted to make it up in some way he could give his wife a present. Vasquez not only gave a present to his wife, but to his sister-in-law, named Casiana, as well, and to the children. Lengths of flowered goods, earrings, rings and candy. Finally every time Vasquez came he went to Doroteo's house and stayed there. Doroteo's sister-in-law, an Indian woman, near thirty and very quiet, so quiet that her life seemed set in a frame of silence, served him his food and prepared his bed. She spread it on the porch, for the mountain outlaws always refuse to sleep in a room with only one door, as were the two that comprised the house. In the middle of the night, when the stars are brightest and light up the loneliness, Casiana went to share his bed. The man pursued by the law and the woman who did not talk sought one another until they met in the fertile union of the flesh.

Fiero Vasquez and Doroteo understood each other and even reached terms of intimacy. They joked, they laughed, and talked to their heart's content. One day the villager asked the bandit if one of his followers had told him about meeting a man with a knotted handkerchief and the password.

"No, nothing."

Doroteo told him that as he was going along the plateau he met a man who looked like a savage: hairy, barefooted, wearing only pants, a poncho over his naked torso, and a hat full of holes. His face, weatherbeaten by sun, rain, and wind, looked both ferocious and stupid. It was a beast that resembled a man, and he covered him with a rusty shotgun without saying a word. Doroteo showed him the handkerchief, but the beast did not move a muscle. With the shotgun pointed menacingly at his breast he went on demanding his money or his life. Then Doroteo, trembling with fear, said, "Righteous Judge, Our Saviour." The little eyes of the animal gave a blink of doubt, and then suddenly opened wide with rage. Doroteo realized his mistake and shouted, "Fiero Saviour," which saved him from being shot. The man went off without saying a single word.

"Oh, yes, he's a brute," Fiero explained. "He doesn't say four words all day long, and he never tells anything. He doesn't wear shoes because he can walk on stones and thorns without feeling them. He doesn't need a shirt, either, for he doesn't feel the cold. Would you believe he sleeps on the bare floor? If by chance he goes to bed with blankets they smother him so he can't sleep. He's really a savage. The worst of it is that you can't argue with him. He won't pay attention to anything except what he sees with his own eyes or feels. If anybody lays a finger on him he's like a wild animal. He's already killed two of his comrades. His name is Valencio and I have never found out his last name. I don't believe he knows it himself."

The two friends laughed at Doroteo's fright and his mix-up with the password, which nearly cost him his life. Then, at some length, they speculated pensively about the primitive, unhappy personality of Valencio.

"Of course, he understands a little," said Fiero, "if you give him a simple case in point, and he understands insults if you compare him with animals. Anybody who calls him a donkey or a beast is lost. When he understands an order, he carries it out no matter what happens, and he is very loyal. . . ."

That night while Casiana lay firmly and tenderly clasped in the bandit's arms, she began, strangely enough, to talk:

"Valencio is my brother."

With simple words, interrupted at times by emotion or the difficulty of pronouncing them, she told him her story, haltingly, for she had so little habit of talking.

Casiana's parents, and the parents of her parents, were shepherds on a ranch bigger than Umay on the other side of the nearby town, two or three days' journey from it or more. The ranch had very high lonely plateaus, and Doroteo's wife, Valencio, and she were born on these steppes in a stone hut or in the open fields, and they grew up watching the sheep graze. Every twelve or fourteen moons an overseer would come with two or three Indians to count the sheep and bring salt for the sheep and for them. Their father planted a patch of potatoes and all they had to eat was: potatoes and salt. They kept the potatoes in pits dug in the side of the hill. If, when the sheep were counted, there were any missing, because they had been eaten by foxes or for some other reason, the overseer put them down in a notebook as "lost." Even if they were killed by lightning, they were still "lost." So, in this way, her father was always in debt. He worked year after year, as his forefathers had worked, and he never got out of debt. The increase in the flock was credited only to the ranch.

They could not always stay in their stone hut. The overseer would say to them:

"Take the sheep to graze on the other slope, far away; grazing isn't going around and around in the same spot."

Then they had to go high up on the desolate peaks and sleep in caves or those improvised conical huts of straw that look like mushrooms of the highlands. That way they got used to the cold, and, besides, they were too poor to have many clothes, although their mother spun and wove all she could; but there were five of them and the overseer gave her only a few fleeces of wool at shearing time. Nor did they talk much because they knew their tasks and their misfortune and, aside from the overseer and the herders, they almost never saw strangers. Once in a while, in the distance, they could see another flock of sheep. Sometimes, very rarely, a rider crossed the plain at a gallop, fleeing

from the cold and the desolation. So they were quiet.

One time a priest passed, accompanied by several persons. The father called loudly to him, "Taita priest, taita priest," to come and baptize the children. The priest and his escort came over, but after they had dismounted the children were nowhere to be found. Shy as savages they had run away and hidden in a pile of rocks that formed a kind of foxes' den. They called them but they would not come or even answer. Whereupon the priest prayed, said his words in Latin over the rocks, surrounded by his escort and the shamefaced parents, and poured the holy water and salt through the openings in the rocks.

So that they would not eat the sheep, the overseer gave the father ten lashes for every animal that was missing. When many were gone he did not bother counting, but plied the whip until his arm got tired. But it happened that certain years the potato crop was poor or the potatoes spoiled or sprouted in the pits. They were hungry and the father would kill a sheep, saying, "My poor children, I'll stand the lashes." They knew when it was time for the overseer to come, for the father would put a pebble in a certain spot each moon, and he measured time that way. When there were twelve or fourteen pebbles the overseer would arrive. After the sheep were counted, if any were missing, the overseer would begin to growl, working himself into a fury:

"So it was the lightning, the frost, the foxes, eh? You thief! You eat them and then lie about it. Come over here and take your medicine."

He would unwind a long whip he carried on his saddle, and make the shepherd kneel. At that great height, from which one could look down upon the horizons, it seemed as though the whip reached as high as heaven to curl through the clouds or brush the blue arch of the sky as it fell upon the father's back. At each blow he groaned deeply. At times he fell over unconscious. His back was a black-and-blue mass from which purplish stripes extended down his flanks. After the overseer had left, his wife polluted him with herbs.

It was like this, year after year. From generation to generation, from father to son, the shepherds inherited work, poverty, the whip, and the never-paid-up debt. Run away? Some had tried it, but the rancher followed them until he found them. Why talk of their punishment and suffering? The shepherds grew hardened in their isolation and silence, and their tears flowed within them.

The time came when the father died and they buried him somewhere

on the steppe. It was not long before his wife followed him. As was customary, the children inherited the debts. The next time the overseer appeared it was not to count the sheep, but to take away Paula, now Doroteo Quispe's wife. The rancher's daughter was going to live in the capital of the province and she needed a servant. Valencio and Casiana, who were still very young, felt utterly lost in the immensity of the steppe. But what could they do? From whom could they ask help? So they worked on. They struggled with the sharp hostility of the rocks and the doleful whistle of the wind in the tall grass, under the violent storms.

One day the overseer arrived with three Indians to count the sheep. Many were missing. Valencio understood that now it was his turn, and he knelt down to receive his whipping. But something happened inside him at that moment. It must have been that the suffering, damned up for long years and years, had finally burst its walls. He jumped to his feet with a savage yell, brandishing the knife shepherds use to skin the sheep that have been killed by lightning. The overseer who was unarmed, never having expected such a thing to happen, ran to his horse, mounted, and galloped down the mountainside. The Indians, who had come with him, looked at Valencio in amazement. The shepherd flung himself at them, his knife glittering on high, screaming:

"Devils! Slaves! Toadies!"

Whereupon the Indians, too, started to run, but, as they had no horses, they went slipping and sliding, like rolling stones, down the hillside. Valencio shot rocks after them with his sling. Then he killed two sheep, and he and Casiana ate one and he put the other in his knapsack. Afterward he made a bundle of his other pair of pants and his blanket, and said:

"I'm going away. Many will come to whip me."

Casiana begged him to take her with him, but he refused, saying he didn't know where he was going or what might become of him. So Valencio left by himself, setting out for no special place. He went past hills and more hills, through passes, over peaks....

Early the next morning the overseer and another ranch hand appeared, armed with shotguns. They had planned to surprise Valencio asleep. All they could do was to swear and threaten. In a few days the overseer was back with two Indian shepherds, a man and a woman to whom he turned over the flock. They came from the other

side of the ranch and had a debt of long standing. Casiana was to pay hers helping them.

"Don't you try to follow your brother's example," he said to her. "We're looking for him and we'll find him. And when we do we will skin him alive."

One day a man who wasn't the overseer came climbing up the slope. A woman was following him, light of foot, accustomed to the hills. Casiana's heart gave a leap of joy as they called her.

"Casianaaa!" cried the woman.

"Casianaaa!" shouted the man.

She ran to meet them. It was Paula and her husband. Doroteo Quispe had become acquainted with the sister in town and was taking her to the community. And they had come for Casiana and Valencio. They regretted hearing what had happened to him, and the three of them left. It made them laugh to think how furious the overseer would be. He looked everywhere for them without being able to find them.

And from then on life had been different for the sisters. Paula even had children. They never lacked for food or clothing, and nobody whipped them or made them work against their will. Casiana did not speak of happiness because she probably did not know the word. She finished her story with these words:

"And I, too, found my man in you."

The bandit did not answer for fear his voice might break. He still had enough heart to feel the sufferings of the poor, which had once been his. He knew what he meant in Casiana's life, and he pressed her fondly to him. He liked the feel of her firm breasts with their eager nipples. The slender bow of the moon was slipping through the sky. After a moment Vasquez told her, speaking softly, too, how Valencio had come to join his band.

Fiero Vasquez had sent two of his men armed with shotguns to waylay a merchant who was to come through a certain part of the highland. But they were the ones who were held up in the strangest fashion. A wild-looking young fellow, armed with a knife, sprang out at them and demanded food. The highwaymen were carrying their guns in plain sight and they understood that the fellow did not know what he was doing. They exchanged rapid glances, and then one said:

"Food? Of course, man. I've got bread right here in my saddlebag."

He made as if to open it and his assailant came over to get the food. As he did so the other bandit hit him a blow on the back of the neck with his gunstock and knocked him flat. When Valencio came to his senses his hands were tied behind his back. They made him tell them all about himself and the bandits roared with laughter at his artless experiences as a highwayman. He had held up a few Indians who had thrown him their bags of parched corn or dried wheat porridge, and had run away as though he were the devil in person. Valencio finally told them that he was afraid to go near any ranch or town for fear of being taken prisoner and punished, or even killed. The bandits decided to untie him and give him food. When he had stuffed himself with bread and meat he took on a satisfied expression. When they suggested that he join them he accepted immediately. The merchant did not come by, and the men returned with the strangest booty they could have found.

The crow of a cock announced the dawn and, as the narrator had to leave, he could not go on with Valencio's adventures as a member of the band.

On Fiero's next visit to his friend's house in Rumi he sat down on a stone bench beside the door, after shaking hands with Doroteo.

"I've been riding hard for five hours."

His horse was breathing loud and evenly.

Paula, Casiana, and the children—a little girl and two boys—came out of the house with a loud shout of welcome. The children climbed onto his knees, and he pulled out of his saddlebag a rag doll and a bag of candy. Then he handed the bag over to the mistress of the house, saying:

"There are some pieces of goods, handkerchiefs, and other little things. You divide them up, Doña Paula, the way you think best . . . I don't understand much about such things."

The women and the children went off and Doroteo sat down beside his friend. He thought he looked tired. He decided he must be going to spend the night, for he had thrown the halter on the porch. Otherwise

he would have left it in its place, for the horse was so well trained it would stand in the same spot for hours, waiting for its master, without the need of stake or hitching rope. Its name was Tordo, for its color was that of the blackbird. It was a noble animal, with large, bright eyes, a head carried high, and a strong, finely formed body. Doroteo was as fond of it as its master, and in the summer, when grass was scarce, he would pluck it handfuls from the fence corners where it grew long. Seeing that Fiero Vasquez was not inclined to talk, he got up and loosened Tordo's girth so it could rest better. Just to say something, he asked, as he came back:

"Do you still know the Righteous Judge?"

"Every word," answered the bandit.

And without waiting for Quispe to ask him he began to say it with a solemn intonation, not too fast and not too slow, raising his voice on the requests but without losing his accent of veneration and devotion.

Both had taken off their hats. Vasquez's hair was parted on the side; Quispe's was like a stubbly hayfield. Doroteo looked at him with his little eyes which he half-closed the better to see, until all that remained was a bright, malicious glitter. He pursed up his thick lips until they almost reached his nose, which was sharp and always seemed to be scenting something. Certainly Doroteo Quispe did not look like a mystic. He looked more like a fox on the watch. Or perhaps a black bear, because of his dark color and his heavy body with its clumsy movements. Fiero was saying:

"Righteous Judge, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who reigns always with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, help me, protect me, and deliver me, by sea or by land, from all who seek to harm me, as Thou deliveredst the Apostle Saint Peter and the Holy Prophet Jonah from the belly of the whale; O Almighty Lord, help me, for I am Thy slave, in everything I undertake and in every kind of game, such as cockfights and card playing, through the grace of the Holy Righteous Judge, whence comes the Holy Trinity. Let these great powers, these great relics, and this holy prayer help me to defend myself against all evil, so that I may find buried treasure, however difficult it may be, without being disturbed by spirits and ghosts, and so that when I am attacked or on the battlefield neither bullets nor knives may prevail against me. Let the arms of mine enemies shiver in their hands, and their guns be powerless, and let mine be successful and never overcome; let mine enemies fall before my feet like the Jews before Jesus Christ; let prison doors, handcuffs, knives, chains, keys, locks,

bars break apart. And Thou, Righteous Judge, who wast born in Jerusalem and sacrificed between two Jews, if mine enemies should pursue me, let not their eyes see me, nor their lips speak to me, nor their hands lay hold upon me, nor their feet overtake me. I shall be girded about with the arms of Saint George, I shall be locked in the cave of the Lion with the keys of Saint Peter, in Noah's Ark shall I be sheltered; with the milk of the Virgin Mary shall I be sprinkled, with Thy precious blood shall I be baptized, in the name of the Lord's Prayer Thou hast repeated, and the three holy wafers Thou hast consecrated, I implore Thee, O Lord, to walk with me and to enter and dwell in my house with joy and comfort. May the Righteous Judge protect me, the Blessed Virgin cover me with her mantle, and the Blessed Trinity be my shield upon my right side. Amen."

They put their hats back on and Quispe's pursed-up mouth opened in a smile of proud satisfaction at such a pupil.

"It's queer that I haven't yet had a chance to use the prayer," mused Vasquez.

Just then old Rosendo Maqui came walking slowly along, leaning on his heavy lloque staff. He looked rather surprised to meet Vasquez there, and he commended Doroteo for his hospitality. He knew the bandit had arrived, and it was to meet him that he came. And as for the hospitality, he had already expressed his opinion to Quispe about the matter, and his words were not exactly approving. The tasks of government oblige their executives, whatever their rank may be, to adopt certain attitudes. But Rosendo Maqui employed the friendly, discreet manners characteristic of his race, and he knew the Spanish proverb which says that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, even though the community had not always been dominated by this idea. The mayor sat down on a maguey stool and absentmindedly watched the clouds drift by. His face wore an air of vague sadness, which was emphasized by the dark-brown poncho he wore instead of his usual one of red and blue stripes.

"What was that I heard?" he inquired indifferently. "A prayer? Were you talking about a prayer?"

The bandit explained the matter frankly and openly, and at that Rosendo Maqui, in a roundabout way, approached the subject that had brought him to Doroteo's house. After looking the ground over, or rather, after clearing it and plowing it up, with a hymn of praise to the peaceful way of life, he tried to persuade Fiero Vasquez to give up the hope of an opportunity to use the prayer, and dedicate himself to a

quiet existence. Without using the word, to avoid any possible offense, what he was suggesting was that he should lead an honest life. He knew, with his delicate tact, just how far he could go without wounding his listener's feelings.

Vasquez heard him with attention and gratitude; a mischievous smile hovered over the face of Quispe.

A somewhat embarrassed silence fell upon them, an explanation seemed to be called for, and Vasquez, after a pause, began to talk in a slow, quiet, powerful voice, as clear as his smile. This voice flowered in the gloomy silence of the caves, flashed in the shout of the holdup, murmured gently in moments of love, and won over its hearers with its strength of conviction. It had a firm accent of assurance, and Fiero, whether he pleaded, expostulated, or explained, seemed always to be in command.

"Don Rosendo, the truth is that what you are saying is good. But what can stop the runaway horse except the gulch into which it falls? Force can do it, too, I will admit. But, in any case, force must use forgiveness, and who forgives? Who has one ounce of pardon for the poor man that needs it? You will answer: the community. But the community is a thing apart ... The law does not forgive, and men, less. If you will listen to me, I will explain ... And I will tell the truth, the whole truth, for good will deserves to be paid with honesty ... I will tell how I was forgiven and lived several years, working hard but afraid of nobody, which is the best of all, and how that pardon came to an end. ..."

Fiero talked for an hour, perhaps two, and he told his story with a wealth of detail. But the gist of his story was briefly this.

It was the time when Fiero was leading an evil life, and had made a reputation as a knife wielder and a bully. He was completely given over to it, for a man gets used to evil as well as to good. It goes without saying that the police were after him and he had many enemies. These were the most dangerous. Before his face they said nothing because they were afraid of him, but they were just waiting a chance to knife him in the back.

One night he was at a dance in a place called Pampa, and about midnight, in spite of the fact that the owner of the place did all he

could to make him stay, he left; for that's the way things go, when they are meant to happen. His horse went along uneasily, with ears twitching, and he said to himself, "What does he see?" for there are times when a horse knows more than a man. He pulled out his revolver just in case. The road narrowed between two hedges of prickly pears and magueys, when all of a sudden, bang! and he fell to the ground senseless and covered with blood.

He never knew how long he lay there, face against the ground, alive, not his mind, but only his body, his body that wanted to live and would not die. When he came to, he touched his wounded face and he realized that one of his enemies had lain in wait for him and had shot him with slivers of iron. He was very weak and he thought he was going to die. But if a man makes up his mind to live, he lives. He got to his feet, his hands all wet from the pool of blood he had been lying in, and started to walk. His face throbbed and burned and was swollen up like a goiter. Every step he took made his face hurt, and it was as though it were trying to throw him to the ground; but he would not give in. A little way ahead was his horse, for his would-be assassin had not stolen it for fear it might betray him. When the horse saw him it came toward him, though snorting and moving its ears suspiciously. The poor animal probably could not believe that this staggering creature, bent over to the ground, could be his master. When they met, Fiero threw his arms around the horse's neck as though he had found a friend. But the horse could not cure him and he needed to have his wounds treated. And who could help him in this loneliness that was his life? He thought of going back to the house where the dance was, but he suspected that his assailant might be around there and would not miss the chance to finish him off when he saw how badly he was hurt. He drew his horse over to a rock and managed to get on its back. He had to hold on to the front of the saddle with both hands to keep from falling off.

Tizon started off at an easy walk. He was a good pony, black, for he was already using them of that color, small, but stout-hearted and willing. He was not to be compared with Tordo, but he did his job well, and it's the intention that counts. He rode and rode, and it seemed as if day would never come. And Fiero said to himself, "Who will cure my wounds? Now I am in a fix, and today I see what it is to be alone in the world." He remembered that he had two women, but they lived two or three days' ride away and he would never be able to make it. His face burned and felt heavy. Once more the idea of death came to him. Perhaps the dog who shot at him, like the dog he was, had smeared the iron slivers with some sort of filth so that if he was not killed outright he would die from his infected wounds. There are

devils who do things like that. He went on, thinking of his misfortune and not knowing what to do.

The horse reached a fork in the road and stopped there. One led up to the highlands and the other ran level to the town of Cajabamba. Tizon was in the habit of taking the highland road, but he stopped. He was thinking, for there are times when horses are wiser than men, and anyway this is how things happen when they are meant to. Fiero reasoned that if he went up to the highlands he would surely die, whereas if he went into the town ... And he remembered a young lady that he had seen in a house where he used to go to sell wood long ago. She was white and slender and was known to be kind-hearted. He could still remember her name, Elena Lynch. He had heard that she was married. It was several years since he had seen her, and perhaps her heart was not the same now. She used to be good to the poor. Well, maybe ... It was staking everything on one card.

He rode and rode. The morning came and in the top of the cherry trees the birds began to sing. There was the town, fresh with dawn. He went in, for a man's life is worth more than a card in the deck. The streets were still empty. The house was large and had a carved door. He managed to get off his horse and fell beside the door, and he pounded on it with all the strength he had left, as hard as he could, and he heard his blows enter the hallway, reach the corridors, and resound against the century-old walls.

A servant came to open the heavy door, and when she saw him she gave a scream and ran away. It would have frightened anybody to see him lying there on the ground soaked in blood. Then Señora Elena herself came out and he said to her:

"Here is a poor wretch, little mother, have mercy!"

The lady sent for two servants and had them carry him to a room in the back yard. One of them was the stableboy, a nice fellow with whom he made friends. They also brought Tizon in, and he could not help thinking how pleased the shaggy, dusty little pony, who was used to filling up on whatever he could get hold of, would be to find himself eating alfalfa in a manger with fine, well-tended horses. The life of every poor person has its ups and downs.

Señora Elena took care of him. She washed his face with water of one color and then another and with a pair of tweezers she pulled out the bits of iron, and then she put a salve on it, and bandaged it. As she worked over him, she said:

"Children, why do you treat one another like this? What wrong have you done for them to wound you so?"

"A man doesn't even know what he's doing, little mother."

He saw that the lady was sorry for him and was shocked by the wound. When she had finished she told the servants what to do and they put him in a good bed and gave him breakfast enough for two. The pain was lessening and he hardly felt it any more. When he looked about him, and saw that he was being cared for and there was no danger that he'd be captured or killed, he thought that everything in the world was not bad.

The next day the lady came in and treated him again, and whether it was that she had become suspicious or had only now noticed that the rest of his face was pitted from smallpox, she asked him,

"And who are you?"

He thought it would be worse if he tried to deceive her, since it would have made her suspicious, so he said:

"Vasquez."

Señora Elena went on:

"Fiero Vasquez?" and when he said, "Yes, little mother," she almost fainted.

Anyway she treated him, and then she asked him how he happened to be in such a fix and what was the reason for his misfortunes. And he told her all that had happened to him and how he got into trouble, keeping to himself the really unfavorable parts because "to keep quiet about a thing is not lying"—these are his own words—"if they haven't asked about the thing you are not talking about." She listened to him without making any comment and Fiero was afraid she was going to put him out, but when he finished she said to him:

"Teodoro will come, and I'll see if I can put in a word for you."

It seemed as though Don Teodoro Alegria would never come. He was known throughout the region as a proud man, a great rider, and was beloved by the people. When it was his saint's time—for it was not merely a day—all his friends and acquaintances brought him presents, and the two bands of music of the town came and the celebration lasted for two weeks. He was famous for this and other things.

Meanwhile the invalid improved and Señora Elena's children came in to visit him and he entertained them with stories of animals—pumas, foxes, condors.

And one day, rather one Saturday night, Don Teodoro arrived. His horse's shoes made a great clatter in the courtyard, and his wife and children went joyfully out to receive him.

"The master has come!" shouted the servants.

For the first time in his life Fiero felt uneasy about what another man might think. As the servants went by he called them in to ask what the master had said.

Late, after dinner, the stableboy, Emilio, came to tell him what he knew. Señora Elena started telling her husband about Fiero, and the children broke in to say:

"Once he met a puma as big as a donkey," and Don Teodoro laughed heartily. At the end the lady had said:

"He seems more unfortunate than bad to me," and the master, who understood his people, had answered, "I'll look him over." Then he asked the children to tell him more about the puma and he laughed as they chattered away.

Early the next morning Don Teodoro came into the wounded man's room, followed by Señora Elena.

"Well, now, let's have a look at this big bandit," he said half-serious, half-jokingly.

He was a tall, stout man, calm of manner, in whose white face, of marked Spanish features, large black eyes and a thick mustache were the most outstanding features. He was still wearing riding clothes, his favorite attire.

"Here I am, master," answered Fiero, who knew how to say the right thing at the right time, "still alive, through the kindness of my little mother."

Then Don Teodoro said to his wife:

"You go out, Elenita, and let us talk as man to man."

The lady went out, and the two men looked at each other, though not

precisely eye to eye, for one of Fiero's was hidden by the bandage, and he was blind in it anyway. And Don Teodoro, in his way, half-friendly, half-severe, asked how he had got into such a scrape; and he told him, besides, that he wanted the truth, otherwise it would go hard with him, for he did not like fairy stories, and he might as well know it right from the start. So Fiero promised to tell the truth, and everything that had happened to him, one by one. Then he said:

"Master, have you a mother?"

Don Teodoro said he had, and then Fiero began his story.

His father had died and he was left to take care of his mother. They lived in a little house on the outskirts of the pampa. Beside the house they had two fields, one for wheat and one for corn. The house was still there, full of holes, and the fields grown to weeds. How could it be otherwise when there was no one there to look after the place? The land did not produce very much and he had to help out by cutting wood in the hills and taking it to Cajabamba to sell—that's how he had happened to know Señora Elena—or working at whatever he could, so his mother should lack for nothing. He even collected dung for a tilemaker to fire his tiles. Once a cattle dealer hired him to go to the coast with him as drover, and he learned the business and began to buy and sell cattle: one today, two tomorrow, and things were going along well. The business kept him away from home two weeks at a time, sometimes a month.

And they had a neighbor, Malaquias, a devil if there ever was one, who had a bull that was the spitting image of its owner. The bull would jump the fence and get into their fields, and Don Malaquias, who was well-to-do, didn't even try to get it out. When he was away, his mother had to chase after the animal to keep it from ruining the crops. But one night it broke down the gate and, with several other bulls, got into the wheat and ate up the whole field. In the morning Don Malaquias looked at the destruction as though nothing had happened.

Fiero's mother said to him:

"You'll have to pay me, Don Malaquias. Why don't you put these animals somewhere else? You've got so much room, and you don't take any care. My poor son has to hire a team to plant our fields and you let your stock make us poorer."

And Don Malaquias, instead of feeling sorry, struck her in the face and

said:

"No bitch is going to tell me what to do."

Fiero came back this time happier than ever because he had two hundred soles and he could buy more cattle and earn more. When he saw the bare fields, his mother said to him:

"I don't know how it happened, whether it was Don Malaquias's stock or some other neighbor's."

That was because the poor soul was a mother before anything else, and she preferred to swallow her humiliation rather than have her son get into trouble. He said to her:

"With the money I am making I can put up a good fence; I'll bring barbed wire from the coast."

Dreams are like that.

Time went by and he suspected nothing. Until one day he went to a wheat threshing and there was a girl there he'd never wanted to have anything to do with because she was a troublemaker. There's nothing in the world as bad as a woman when she wants to make trouble. She was half-drunk, and she began to say:

"Some reap their harvests and others don't. It's the cowards who don't. And they even let their mothers be insulted."

He paid no attention to her but he saw they were all looking at him; so he went over to a boy who was his friend, and he said to him: "If you're my friend, you'll tell me what this is all about," and the fellow had to tell him. For a while he could not see or hear. His breast hurt him, and when he got home, his mother said to him:

"Son, what ails you? You look sick."

And he said:

"I guess I drank too much."

But his mother was uneasy. They went into the house and in a little while he went out again saying:

"I'll be back."

Don Malaquias was sitting at his door, and when he saw Vasquez's

face he jumped up shouting:

"My revolver!"

Vasquez caught up with him and grabbed him by the back of the neck.

"You thought I was afraid, did you? I didn't know about it."

And he buried his knife in the man's bull chest. He came home and his mother cried:

"What a misfortune! I had even forgotten about it."

That was how he turned into a criminal, for, as God was his witness, he had never even thought of killing anybody before that. He had a good heart, and he wanted to live in peace. But every man has his hour of temptation and some come through it and some don't, like crossing a river. Everything depends on the ford, that is to say, on luck. He had to live as a fugitive, always fleeing. That is the worst thing that can happen to a man. There were some who, when they found out he had killed a man, tried to draw him into a fight to show that they were as tough as he was. He grew accustomed to evil and he sank deeper and deeper into his misfortune. When they didn't try to provoke him into a fight, they tried to settle old scores and he became so entangled he never could get free.

And since Don Teodoro didn't ask him any specific questions, he applied once more his formula that "it's no lie to keep quiet about what you're not asked."

When he had finished, he said to the master:

"Have pity on a poor wretch. You see it was for my mother. Begging your pardon, master, what would you have done?"

Don Teodoro paused before he answered, and finally said:

"I don't know, I don't know what I would have done."

Then it was the master's turn, and he was a man who knew how to talk to people. He pushed his palm-leaf hat a little to one side, and scratched the top of his head worriedly, and then said, in that half-friendly, half-commanding tone of his:

"Damn it, man, damn it . . . you've got me in a tight spot. It's a tradition of both my wife's family and my own never to refuse

hospitality to anyone who comes here. And Elena adds to this old custom her kindness. We have done our duty taking care of you, and now I ought to send you away, and my conscience would be at ease. But now comes the rub; you're asking me for protection. On the one hand people will say, 'He's harboring criminals'; on the other hand I ask myself: if I let him go, he'll keep on the same way, and who knows but what the man could turn over a new leaf. That's what has me perplexed."

"I swear to you," Fiero answered him quickly, "by the memory of my poor mother, who died in sorrow, that I'll be good."

Then Don Teodoro thought a while longer, straightened his big hat, and said:

"I hope you mean it. From today on you're working for me."

"Elena is going to give you a suit of clothes and a poncho. You'd better start by getting rid of those black clothes."

Fiero thanked him, and Don Teodoro left with these words:

"Tomorrow we're going to Tuco, and the way to thank me is not with words but with your behavior."

Tuco was a sugar plantation, situated in the valley of Condebamba, where they made brown sugar. When they left, as they went through Pampa, which is a large place, everybody they met greeted Don Teodoro, and he answered them all, "Good-bye, friend. Good-bye, friend," and he put his fine horse through its paces, which did credit to its Arabian ancestry.

It was a pleasure to accompany a man who was such a rider and so popular. When Fiero asked the men at Tuco about him they answered, "He's kind of severe, but he's never unjust"; and they all loved him because the thing a poor man asks above all is justice, even if it is a little severe. Fiero soon realized that it was not only at Tuco that Don Teodoro was the master. In the city, too, and the whole province. He was young and strong and he held them all in the hollow of his hand. Fiero was proud of his boss, and would have died for him, and many others felt the same way. When any of the authorities of Cajabamba—mayor or judge—did wrong, the people would come to Don Teodoro in demand of justice. Then he, at the head of the people, would go after the wrongdoer, make him get on a donkey, and ride him out of town with a band and firecrackers. The person expelled like this never returned.

Don Teodoro explained:

"If we complain to the capital, they will pay no attention to us. In Lima they laugh at the provinces and dump their scoundrels on us. So we have our laugh at them too."

The years went by and Fiero behaved well and Don Teodoro looked after him. Nobody would have dared to try to capture him in Tuco or in his master's company. Nothing in life can be kept hidden and one day Don Teodoro sent for him and said:

"I've heard about some old villains of yours. When you were telling me your life, you took good care not to mention them. I ought to throw you out. But I see that you did not keep them to yourself to fool me and go back to your old ways at the first opportunity, but because you really wanted to do better. So I forgive you." "That's why I did it, boss," Fiero answered, "that's exactly why," and he was deeply touched.

The years went on. Fiero stuck to his master like a bur. The things they went through together!

Once in the month of February, the river Condebamba rose and overflowed its banks two miles and it must have been three miles at the ford. The master was good at fording, but Fiero was better and especially at night. It was a Saturday, the day before Señora Elena's saint's day. It took Don Teodoro a long time to get finished, because it was the end of a fortnight and he had to make up the accounts and pay the hands. When he had finished it was dark, and the only light came from a watery little new moon that looked more like a slice of mamay apple than a moon as it emerged from the heavy gray clouds. The master said:

"Let's go, Fiero. This is where you can tell if a man's a man." "Let's go, sir," Fiero answered.

They saddled the best horses. As they rode toward the river, which flowed by half a league away, the master said with satisfaction:

"With weather like this Elena won't be expecting me till tomorrow. We'll give her a nice surprise for a present."

Fiero agreed with him, not to show the white feather; but inside he

was thinking that they were getting into deep water even before they reached the river.

When they got to the river they found that it had washed out the bank leaving a big drop. So they went upstream alongside the bank looking for a ford. There wasn't any and the water seemed very deep everywhere. Finally they found a sloping bank and they started down. Fiero, who was an expert at crossing fords, rode ahead. The horses splashed around, then the water rose higher and the bottom fell away. Suddenly splash! . . . and again splash! . . . and the water was up to the horses' chests. They had stepped into a deep ditch.

"It's deep, Fiero." "It's deep, sir."

But neither spoke of turning back. So they kept on, the horses cleaving the water with their chests, against the current—which is better than drifting with it, for the horses may lose their footing and be easily swept away. There is nothing worse than a weak or nervous horse going downstream. Sooner or later it will be swept away. Both Fiero and the master had good horses and neither of the men was afraid to look at the water. Black, convulsive, it formed whirlpools in some spots, quiet pools in others, and in places it ran along almost smooth. Travelers who get dizzy should look at the sky or some distant spot while another person tows their horse by a rope. If not, their heads begin to whirl and they start to vomit and fall into the water.

Appearances are deceiving and this holds true of rivers. There where the water swirls and boils hardest is where it is the shallowest and easiest to cross. The waves are produced by the nearness of the stones on the bottom. And, on the contrary, where the water flows smoothly is where it is dangerous because of the depth and it can easily swallow up horse and rider. The Condebamba river in the wintertime carries a great volume of water that covers the whole width of its bed, which is dangerously divided in the lower part into channels, arms, ditches, bends, which in turn are full of pools and eddies. At times the water comes only to the hocks of the horse and suddenly it goes over the rider. It is splendid and dangerous to cross this great river. One has to have a strong horse, a keen eye, and a cool head.

They went ahead and got out of the ditch. The water was above the stirrup irons. From the whole width of the river, from one side to the other, up and down there rose a ceaseless, monotonous murmur like a hoarse grumble or warning. The moon finally managed to give a little light and Fiero saw the ford. As the water at this point was not high, they turned downstream to get around the channels and pools they

saw a little further on. They skirted around them, for rocks had piled up lower down to form a kind of dam. When they started back upstream the water grew deep, and the horses had to swim with their heads high to keep them out of the water. The legs of the riders were soaked and they could feel the stubborn tug of the water at their flesh, and the slipping of the earth and pebbles beneath them.

"Ballo! Steady!" they shouted to the bundles of tense nerves that were the horses. These stiffened and advanced slowly, feeling their way and snorting nervously.

From time to time the water seemed to swell and pile up, growing immense. It was surely raining farther up the river. Their voices sounded sharp and harsh in the night. Once more they came out of a deep place. And they rode up and down with fair luck, avoiding the bad spots or getting through them when they had no other choice.

They were more than halfway across the river when they noticed that it was here that the water had hit the hardest, piling up shoals of sand and stones and cutting deep channels. Fiero was on the edge of one of the shoals looking down into the water when suddenly—splash!—he went under. The crumbling shoal had given way and horse and rider fell into a deep inlet. The horse floundered about trying to swim; the rider relieved him of his weight by throwing himself off to one side, and both were swept away by the current.

What became of Don Teodoro? The master was following right behind, close to his guide, and now he would have to manage by himself. He saw them disappear in the distance and, thinking they might emerge further down, he called:

"Fiero! Fierooo!"

The only answer was the rushing of the angry waters. He, too, knew how to ford, and he made up his mind to cross anyway. He started upstream, moving a little toward the middle of the river to get away from the edges of the shoals that might give him a bad time. His horse was nervous and difficult to manage, for it kept trying to go in the direction where the lead horse had disappeared. Farther ahead the current became calmer and the branch widened out. Where Fiero had gone under, the branch was banked up and rushed along violently. Don Teodoro could see this by the light of the moon which emerged from the clouds. The dark water looked less menacing by the light of the moon, which, though not very bright, did throw some light on the black muddy waves. The lone rider scrutinized the fords, and

cautiously started across one. The brave horse snorted and struggled, and he had to hold a tight rein on him to keep him from stumbling and falling into a pool. Suddenly, as happens with rivers, he was over on the other side. And then what did the master do?

Fiero always remembered and was proud of that search. Along the bank, downstream, the master galloped shouting:

"Fierooo! Fierooo!"

The valley was flat and the hills far away, so there was no echo. Only the steady hoarse voice of the river. Then the master lighted a fire with matches he had cautiously put in his breast pocket—he was wise in the ways of the country. He dried his clothes and the saddlepads and sheepskins—one should never dry leather by the fire for it makes it wrinkle up—and this gave his horse a chance to rest. As soon as it began to get light he saddled and set out again downstream, calling every little while, hoping to find his Fiero. And as he got no answer, he thought, "Maybe I'll find his body so I can bury it."

Meanwhile, what had happened to Fiero himself? When he jumped off into the water he caught hold of the horse's neck. He could feel that the water was very deep, but the horse swam along easily. He was frightened, though, and he wouldn't let himself be guided. Fiero tried to draw him to one side with the reins, in an effort to get him out of the main stream; but the horse kept to the current, in the middle of the stream, not knowing that this way he'd never be able to get out. "Ballo! Steady!" The horse paid no attention to him. He kept swimming ahead.

They were now far down the river. The moon came out and Fiero hoped the horse would see the trees along the bank and make for them. But the horse did not see or think about anything. He was mad with fear. Fiero thought at times of the dangerous expedient of throwing off his poncho, letting go of the horse's neck, and trying to swim ashore, but then he said to himself, "It seems a shame to leave the horse. Things haven't come to the worst yet." And every moment they were further downstream, and the horse seemed very tired and about to give up. Suddenly the river swung away from the right, and the great mass of its water rolled leftward, and several other streams flowed into it here and swept with full force toward the other bank. With them went Fiero and the horse and they whirled about like pieces of driftwood.

But those who are on the point of drowning are always saved in

unexpected fashion. The rider quickly let go the horse, holding on to the reins, and the animal obeyed the tug and came out of the water trembling so it could hardly walk. "Fiero, this is another escape you can chalk up to luck." He sat down on the riverbank to think about the master. Maybe he had gone under and he would float by over there without Fiero even seeing him, lost in the darkness of the waters. Though he would surely see the horse if it drifted by. But maybe the horse got out. Or perhaps they were both safe and the master had gone on his way, thinking he was dead.

Day broke and nobody was to be seen anywhere. Only water in the river and sparse trees along the bank. A little way down from where he was sitting was a big whirlpool where he might well have drowned if he had not got out. It had been his luck to be in the stream with the strongest current. Man's destiny is like that. It would not have mattered that he was back on the side of the river they started from, if it had not been for the absence of the master. What could have happened to him? What could have? He slowly began to straighten out the saddle.

Suddenly he heard a voice, "Oooo ... Oooo," far, far away. In a little while it sounded nearer, and soon it seemed as though it were right alongside of him. It was the master's voice. Then Don Teodoro himself appeared on the opposite bank. Fiero began to shout too, and the master saw him, and they waved their hats making signs to one another. They rode downstream until the water swung right again, but gently, to form a wide ford. There were only a few deep places, and with the pleasure of seeing each other again, and the daylight, it was easy to cross. Fiero urged on his horse which was full of life again.

When he and the master met they told one another their difficulties, ate some sapodilla plums they found, and went on with their journey. They left behind the broad, treacherous river, full of mud that blackened the angry, rushing waters to keep a Christian from seeing into the hungry depths. Once more they had crossed it, with bravery and skill, and the emotion of suffering and victory they had shared created a bond between them.

Time went on. Once, in Cajabamba, Don Teodoro called him in and said in front of several friends:

"I owe this money to Luis Rabines, and I want you to take it to him.

He's at his ranch."

He handed him two thousand soles in cash, and Fiero put them into his knapsack, saddled his horse, and left. He rode a whole day before he reached the place; then he handed over the money and the next afternoon he got back. The master received him as usual, without saying a word, as though he had never had a doubt in his mind. The servants told him afterward that Don Teodoro's friends had said:

"Why did you do that? He'll run away with that money."

And Don Teodoro had answered:

"He has become an honest man."

That night, alone in his room, Fiero wept his eyes out for joy. Here was someone who had faith in him, believed in his honesty, and had made a new man of him. To make things better still Fiero had found someone to love him, Gumercinda, a pretty girl, the daughter of one of the hands at Tuco, and life began to seem sweet to him, and he found it good.

One day he thought he would like to go to his land in the pampa and his master said to him:

"Do you think they have forgiven you yet? Better wait awhile longer. People hate to see anybody who has been in trouble get on his feet again and do better than they. Don't go there yet; you don't know how black the human heart is."

Fiero wondered if the master didn't want him to go so that he would keep on working for him, and he thought less highly of him for it. As he stayed on he said to himself: "I owe him a debt of gratitude which I will repay with a few more years' work." One should never be carried away by an impulse, and life shows you what you did not see at the beginning.

And during these years many things took place and Fiero forgot that he had stayed to pay a debt. The most extraordinary thing was the taking of Marcabal, the ranch that belonged to Señora Elena's family. Through shady dealings a wicked man got a claim on it, and, in an attempt to take it over, he armed his men and began to manage it as though it were his own. The owners were going to sue but Don Teodoro said:

"A lawsuit? It will last twenty years. You leave it to me."

It takes a thief to catch a thief, so Don Teodoro armed his people too. Fifteen hard-fisted men. And they set out. The usurper had word of the expedition and he posted guards. Beginning at the place called Casaguate, there was posted at every league an Indian whose job it was to run with the news of their coming until he met the next messenger, who was to pass the message on to the following, and so on, to form a chain. The occupants of Marcabal believed that in this way they could have full knowledge of Don Teodoro's movements and be prepared to repulse any attack.

The thing they didn't reckon with was the Indians' love for Don Teodoro. So it happened that the first watcher, instead of running to notify the next one as soon as he saw them, waited calmly; and as the party rode up he walked over, hat in hand, to greet Don Teodoro: "Good day, master." When they asked him what he was doing there, they found out everything and the Indian joined the party. The same thing happened with the next one and with all they met. Some of the Indians said:

"Oh, master, you've come to save us from this scoundrel," and they told of the wrongs he had committed, with the help of his armed bodyguard.

Don Teodoro reassured them and said to his followers:

"Here's a case where history doesn't repeat itself. This rascal was trying to be an Inca king, and see how his messengers have turned out." Because in the olden days there were beings called Incas who used chains of messengers.

As they proceeded, eight messengers joined the expedition. They climbed a very steep slope. A league before they reached the ranch they came upon the last messenger. Then the master, who knew the ranch well, said:

"We must make it a complete surprise. We won't take the usual road; we'll go around by Cando hill." And leaving the road, they went through fields and hollows to keep from being seen.

They soon reached the hill, which was covered with yellow cando flowers, and from there the ranch buildings, which were very large, were not more than a half mile away. Everything seemed very quiet, and they thought that perhaps even without the warning of the messengers they might be waiting in ambush for them. So the master, putting himself at the head of his men, said:

"Let's go in at a gallop and take them by surprise if we can."

So they dashed in, at full gallop, like a whirlwind, and the sentinel who was sitting on the steps of the largest house barely had time to get to his feet to fire at Don Teodoro, when Fiero rode up and stretched him out with a blow of his gunstock over the back of the head. He lay there senseless.

And the fight they expected? Nothing, not one shot. The house was empty. They went through the rooms without seeing a soul. In the kitchen they solved the mystery. The Indian women who were preparing dinner told them that the people had gone down to bathe and swim in the nearby brook. They were confident of the precautions they had taken. They had even left their arms behind, twenty rifles, telling the lone sentinel to call them if he heard anything.

Don Teodoro ordered his men to take these arms which they had found, and then he said to them:

"Let's have a little fun, boys."

They advanced toward the brook. At a distance they could see their carefree adversaries. They could have surrounded them and taken them prisoners, but the master did not want to do that. They were in a big pool, bathing, swimming, shouting, very happy. Don Teodoro said to his men:

"Two shots into the air, boys."

The fifteen fired off their guns and the bathers were seized with panic. Grabbing up their clothes, without even trying to put them on, they began to run naked through the fields. The Indians who lived around the place came to the doors of their huts at the sound of the shots to see what had happened. Don Teodoro ordered his men who were nearly dead from laughing to keep on firing. And the naked men ran frantically around until they found shelter behind bushes or stones to pull on their clothes, and then kept on running. In half an hour not a one was in sight. When they got back to the house they found that the man Fiero had knocked out was being cared for by the women and had just come to. The poor fellow thought they were going to kill him.

"Do you think I'm the kind of skunk your master is?" Don Teodoro asked him. And then, before the man had recovered from his surprise, he said to him:

"Get out of here this very instant and tell that dog Carlos Esteban"—

that was the name of the usurper—"that I haven't killed you because I'm sorry for you."

The master was always saying things like that. And the time one spent in his company was never dull. Fiero still remembered the twenty fried chickens the Indian women prepared for Don Teodoro and his men. Then they washed them down with long draughts of grape brandy. It was a fine life.

Time went by and the day came when the master sold Tuco and bought the Marcabal Ranch from his wife's family. Then Fiero asked him to let him go back to his little farm and the master said to him:

"All right, go, but don't forget what I told you."

Nevertheless everything seemed favorable. Even the relatives of Don Malaquias had moved away. To be sure, the place was in a pitiful state, but Fiero and Gumercinda, who now had a son, worked hard to put on a new roof, clean out the weeds, mend fences, and dig up the hard ground.

At this time a delegation from the town of Cajabamba came to see Don Teodoro at his new ranch to ask him to run for Congress for the province. Nobody ventured to oppose him, and he was elected and went off to Lima. Fiero felt badly because he knew what Don Teodoro's presence in the province meant to him. He felt all alone, and it even seemed to him that he was being watched, spied upon. It turned out to be true. One day he was out hoeing his corn when a man came along who seemed a mere passer-by; he suddenly stopped beside the fence, pulled out a revolver, and fired point-blank. Fiero dropped to the ground, as though he were dead, and at the same time managed to get out his revolver. His assailant, without taking his eyes off him, pushed open the gate and came toward him, gun in hand, prepared to finish him off. Fiero lay there motionless, for he knew that the slightest movement meant death. But his assailant had to cross a ditch, and as he looked down for a place to jump across, Fiero took advantage of that second to raise his revolver and fire. The man fell into the ditch with a bullet through his breast.

It had all happened in less time than it takes to tell. Several neighbors and some mule drivers who were passing gathered around, drawn by curiosity. His wife was already beside him, without knowing what to do.

"Do you know him? Who is he? Why did you kill him?"

And Fiero told how it had happened and said, besides, that he did not know the man. It was true: he had never seen the man before, or at least he did not remember him. But the neighbors began to make suspicious comments:

"That's what he says, but who knows if it is true?"

"Everybody knows he killed Don Malaquias."

"He was leading a terrible life till Don Teodoro straightened him out."

"Now that Don Teodoro is gone he's returned to his old ways."

"Let's get out of here before he kills us."

"We'd better notify the judge."

Gumercinda began to cry, and the child, who had no idea of what was going on, began to weep bitterly too. Fiero had killed in self-defense, but that would be no help to him. Nobody wanted to forgive him. It was just as the master had said. And now the master was so far away. Fiero saw his life shattered. He embraced his wife and child and left, promising to return to them.

He came back in six months and found the house deserted. One of the hands at Tuco told him that Gumercinda had been put in prison as an accomplice, and their child had died in the same prison of smallpox. And that the prison guards had entered the cell where Gumercinda was held and raped her, and she had got a bad disease and she had to tell her father about it when he came to see her. The poor girl had wept bitterly.

When the father got back to Tuco, he said:

"I told her not to get mixed up with that damned outlaw."

But Gumercinda wasn't in prison any more. The judge had offered to set her free if she would come to his house as cook; and she was in such desperate straits, and did not know when she would be set free, so she accepted. Now she was cook at the judge's house. If a puma had been gnawing at his heart Fiero would not have felt it as much. If they were doing this to his poor innocent wife, what wouldn't they do to him? There was no forgiveness in the world. And as evil breeds evil, he returned to his old life . . . and worse.

Fiero Vasquez finished his story. Casiana and Paula had come to listen to him, and the selectman Porfirio Medrano was there, too, and the lad Calixto Paucar, and other Indians who had been passing by and had stopped one by one. It was only at the end that they noticed one another, for while Vasquez was talking they had been listening even with their eyes.

"I became an outlaw," Vasquez went on, "and one day I met up with a member of Gallayan's highland outfit and I joined them. There I learned all I didn't know . . . I was lucky enough to get away before they caught them. They say they gave them a bad death."

Nobody had noticed how the time had gone by. The sunset was luxuriating in its usual riot of color. Just then four riders came by headed for the uplands, the governor Zenobio Garcia accompanied by three men. All were carrying shotguns. Garcia saw Fiero, greeted Rosendo, and went his way. Either he was afraid to try to take the bandit or he had something urgent to do. Vasquez put his hand on his revolver and watched the horsemen till they were out of sight beyond the distant bend. Then he went on, fixing the mayor with his good eye, and his blind one too:

"Now I have finished. What do you want me to do, Don Rosendo? Go back to my master Don Teodoro? He's on his ranch again, for a man like him could not go on in politics, and in the next election he was defeated by someone in Lima. But how can I go? Things are different. The other time I did not have the record I have now. I would compromise him if I went to him now. A falling stone does not stop until it's smashed to pieces or reaches the bottom, which for me will be the grave. What can I do?"

Rosendo Maqui thoughtfully tapped the edge of his sandals with his lloque staff, and said:

"I agree with you. You know we are always glad to have you here. If you would give up this life, we could still . . . If you wanted to be a farmer . . . Otherwise it's risky to have you come here. We are having a lawsuit and that's a delicate business. You understand, they might make use of the fact that you come here, and say that we are harboring you."

Fiero smiled sadly, showing his brilliant teeth, and looked at Casiana.

There by the door stood his present wife, good, and desirable even though she was not nice looking. Her strength was her beauty. She was wrapped in her highland silence, and her sadness grew deeper. Now he would not be able to see her any more. But he had come to Rumi that afternoon expressly to talk with Rosendo.

"It so happens that it was about the trial that I wanted to talk to you. It's a tricky business; I'm warning you as a friend that it's a tricky business. Don't ask me how I know, but Don Amenabar is in cahoots with that skunk Zenobio who just went by and that other rat, the Magician. They have been talking together a lot; I tell you it's a tricky business. Where do you suppose Zenobio is going at this time of day? And with shotguns and a bodyguard. Why? They never had shotguns before. No doubt that they're going to spend the night at Umay. Why this sudden friendship? I know this for a fact, and don't ask me how, Don Rosendo. You want me to settle down and become a farmer. Please God I'm wrong, but maybe you people aren't going to have anywhere to farm yourselves."

Rosendo Maqui tried to keep his gravity and dignity. Doroteo Quispe looked at his friend as if to say, "Here's a man who never misses a trick." Casiana felt a pang of anguish run through her whole body at the thought of her separation from her husband. The rest did not fully understand, only vaguely gathering that the bandit was in the secret of tremendous, tragic destinies.

It had grown dark and a candle had been lighted on the porch. All hid their doubts in silence that bristled with thoughts. Doroteo Quispe, who wanted to know whether to unsaddle, asked his friend if he was going to spend the night. Vasquez answered:

"I intended to stay, but I didn't bring my shotgun and I'm not running the chance of Zenobio and his men, now that they have guns, trying to come and get me while I am sleeping. I'm leaving right now."

Fiero Vasquez opened his revolver to make sure it was loaded, saddled his horse, and left. In a little while he had melted into the darkness.

5

The Corn and the Wheat

Rosendo Maqui walked away, turning over in his mind the outlaw's words. Could it be possible that Fiero had kept something to himself this time too? His words were serious, and coming from him they were worth thinking over twice, or four times. Even five. Tonight he would call a council meeting. Five heads were better than one, and the selectmen could take their share of a responsibility that was too heavy for his old shoulders.

He mulled over his thoughts as he ate his sweetened porridge that evening. Juanacha tried in vain to get him to talk, asking him questions in her high, clear voice. Rosendo answered yes or no and returned to his silence. Anselmo kept quiet out of respect for the old man's obvious preoccupation, and Juanacha's husband, Sebastian Poma, was silent as usual. After supper he went to ring the church bell at the mayor's order. Candela, meanwhile, gorged himself with the scraps.

Ding ... dong ... ding ... dong. The four peals, at intervals so that they could be plainly counted, filled the hollow and resounded through the hills. The night was filled with the disturbing echo. The village buzzed with comments.

"They're calling a meeting."

"It must be about the harvest."

"No, there's been bad news about the trial."

"It can't be."

"That's what they say."

"There goes Selectman Medrano."

"Why did we elect him anyway? He's not from here."

And to leave no room for doubt, the four strokes clearly pierced the night again.

They reached the mayor's house: first Porfirio Medrano, then Goyo

Auca, then Clemente Yacu, and finally Artidoro Oteiza.

Medrano was that soldier of the Blues who had settled down in Rumi after getting involved with a widow. With gentle solicitude she tended the severe wound he had received in the leg, and the invalid forgot her fading looks in thinking of her kindness. She was much older than Medrano and had since died. Whereupon he took the offensive and persuaded a young girl of twenty how wise it would be to be guided by a person of experience. She had given him several children. It was apparent that Medrano had sunk deep roots in Rumi. His nicked saber hung rusty on the wall, and he used his old Peabody rifle to hunt deer. Despite his name, he said his parents had been Indians, and it was obvious that he was an Indian. His sharp-featured, dark face, and his love of the land were proof of it. The only thing was that every once in a while he had sudden outbursts of humor that made Maqui, who had given the matter much thought, decide he must be of mixed blood. He reminded him of his beloved son, Benito Castro.

There is little to be said about Goyo Auca. He was as small and hard as a pebble which, when thrown by Rosendo's skillful hand, could hit hard. He was utterly devoted to the mayor. His "That's right, taita," was the unfailing response of his loyalty and respect every time Maqui shared his ideas with him. His strength was out of all proportion to his size, and he was always the first in any of the community tasks, puffing and blowing loudly. It was the form his vanity took.

Clemente Yacu had pride and good sense. With his straw hat cocked to one side and his poncho thrown back over his shoulder, he walked calm and erect, and it was said he would undoubtedly become mayor some day. In this easygoing village neither his pace nor that of time was in any haste to give him the job. Yacu was distinguished for his judgment in matters pertaining to the land. "Good for wheat," "Good for corn," "Good for potatoes," he would say solemnly, examining a handful of dirt when there was a question of crop rotation. And his opinion was right.

Artidoro Oteiza was white, and both his color and his name were evidence of his Spanish descent. Nevertheless, his parents and the parents of his parents had been members of the community. and there was no knowledge of any recent crossbreeding. Maqui had seen many whites among the Oteizas. Who can say what remote conquistador, in the far-off days of the Conquest, had mated with some Indian girl, and his stock had cropped out stubbornly in his descendants from time to time. In everything Oteiza behaved like any other member of the community, and nobody ever thought of him as an outsider. He was

fond of animals and, as he was strong, he was an outstanding figure at the roundups. His straggling little mustache showed a pair of smiling lips.

The last three were married, too, otherwise they could not have held posts of such importance. They also had children, and although the traditional law of the community did not demand that those in charge have descendants, it did give them a certain weight of responsibility, and linked them more closely to the destiny of the village.

That night, when they arrived, Juanacha had finished washing the pots and gourds, and neither she nor her husband nor Anselmo were anywhere to be seen. In the fireplace a few sticks of wood burned with a fitful flame. Rosendo invited the selectmen to sit down on the clay bench, offered them coca from a big home-made pouch, and began to speak. Every now and then he would throw a stick of wood on the fire to keep up the lazy blaze. The light shone on the brown faces and sank into Oteiza's, brightening his ruddy color. The ponchos received it cheerfully on their many stripes, and the brims of the hats threw the crowns into the shadow.

Rosendo told, in his solemn slow voice, of his visit to Bismarck Ruiz, to which Goyo Auca had been a witness. Naturally, the latter never failed to add his "That's right, taita." Then he told them of Nasha Suro's forebodings, which were undoubtedly known to everybody in the village. Finally, he told them of Fiero Vasquez's information or, rather, suspicions, and at the same time he told them of the doubtful possibility of Vasquez returning to Rumi, to all of which Selectman Porfirio Medrano was a witness. In concluding this long, detailed exposition, during which several sticks of wood had been burned up, he said that he had some ideas on each one of these topics, but that he would like to hear those of the selectmen so that they might be in agreement. The business in hand was nothing less than the fate of the community.

The selectmen remained silent for a moment as though weighing the responsibility of their own judgment. Porfirio Medrano began firmly:

"Who can tell about these rich men? What I say is that we ought to remember the proverb that says: It was overconfidence that killed Palomino. Nobody ever learns by another's experience. When you're dealing with these rich men you can expect the worst. I know, I have had experience . . . My grandfather lost a suit over water rights to a rich man. And what could the poor old man do without water? He had to sell his land, practically give it away. My grandfather had to

become a renter. All of us here have seen it, but we haven't felt it. If this Bismarck Ruiz is a drunkard and a woman chaser, that seems bad to me. About Nasha . . . Well, I can remember all kind of prophecies she's made. Sometimes they came true, sometimes they didn't. That's the way with all fortunetellers. What Fiero had to say seems most serious of all to me. Maybe that Zenobio is mixed up in it, and as for the Magician, that goes without saying. . . ."

All of them took part in the discussion of the problems. Some spoke of Nasha's brother, who was very shrewd, and Rosendo mentioned her father who was justly famous throughout the district. But she received scant attention. Should they get somebody else instead of Bismarck Ruiz? Who? There was the difficulty. Arana was working for the other side, and everybody knew the other lawyers could hardly read or write. Fiero Vasquez knew a lot, no question about that. He could get information everywhere. But could you believe everything he said? Might he not be one of Amenabar's agents, too? The suspicion made them very uneasy. They talked on like this for a long time. The fires of the village had died down. Some of the villagers looked at the light in Rosendo's house and said:

"They can't be talking about the harvest this long."

Finally the council decided to send Goyo Auca the next day to see Bismarck Ruiz and get full information. That was the practical thing to do. And, also, Rosendo could send Mardoqueo, on the pretext of selling his mats, to Umay, to spy out what was going on there. And, in view of what might happen, the community should get on with the work of the season. Porfirio Medrano informed them that the chicha liquor for the harvest was ready.

"We can begin on the corn tomorrow."

When the selectmen left, the moon had already come up. Rosendo covered the fire with an old clay pot and went to bed.

The wheat field and cornfield formed a village orchestra played by a cheerful breeze. The wheat was thick and ripe, and stood in the broad field on the hillside like arrows shot from the sun. Each stalk of corn looked like a bewhiskered, satisfied man. There was a riddle that emphasized still more its human resemblance:

In the mountain mountain

There is a very old man.

He has teeth and does not eat,

He has whiskers and is not a man,

What can he be?

Everybody knew the answer was corn. It was and was not a man. Since times immemorial this plant had been so close to man that it could almost be considered human.

Marguicha had finished her turn at milking and was now free, merry, and elusive, while Augusto pursued. She knew she was the prettiest girl of the village, and she could not make up her mind about the many lads who courted her.

"Tomorrow we're going to harvest, Marguicha. . . ."

"Tomorrow, Augusto. . . ."

She recalled the riddle of the corn and asked him if he knew any others. His answer was a sweet huaino. He offered it to her like a simple, beautiful wild flower for her fluttering breast:

What pretty leaves

Has the daisy!

What a pretty plant

For my consolation!

What pretty eyes

Has Margarita!

What a pretty girl

To keep me from sleep!

Be for my poor love,

Little dove,

Like the flower called

Everlasting!

It said "be for my poor love," but that didn't matter. Marguicha understood perfectly. Augusto was a minstrel. It was to his Marga, Marguicha, Margarita, that he was singing.

They sat on the stone wall looking out over the cornfield. Marguicha was deeply touched, but she couldn't make up her mind to kiss him. Was it Demetrio that she was in love with? Suddenly she caught his arm, squeezed it, and then, with a little scream, jumped down and ran all the way to her house. There was fear and happiness in her cry. Augusto did not know what to think and he felt a little sad.

It was dark night when Goyo Auca returned to the village. He had found Bismarck Ruiz working in his office. The lawyer had told him that the plaintiffs were so bewildered they did not know what to do. The proof was that they had not answered yet. Zenobio Garcia had nothing to do with the matter, and the Magician, less. Anyway, he could discredit them by bringing up old scores they still had unsettled with the law.

This news heartened everybody. And to make things even better, "Tomorrow, tomorrow the harvest begins."

And the harvest began. Men and women, old and young, even children, went to the cornfield. The dark faces and the bright clothes contrasted beautifully with the pale gold of the ripe corn. It was a warm clear morning and the earth seemed happy over the ripened grain it had brought forth.

The huskers tore open the top of the ear by hand or with a wooden pick that hung from their wrist; then they stripped the husks down with both hands and pulled out the ear of corn. The bright ears—red, purple, white, yellow—swelled the striped sacks. Other harvesters pulled off the pods of lima and string beans twined around the cornstalks, and others gathered up the chicalyos, a huge, pale variety of squash. The ears of corn were carried to the cawro built of magueys, in which they were placed vertically on top of one another, in the operation known as mucura, so that the sun could finish drying

out the still milky grains. In the north of Peru, Quechua and the other dialects had fled before the advance of the language of the whites and the half-breeds, taking refuge among the Indians of the Pampa of Cajamarca and the mountain passes of Huaylas. But here there were left behind, to be affectionately cherished, the old agricultural terms that were rooted in men's hearts like the plants in the earth. The cauro was in the village square, in front of the mayor's house. Beside it, the lima beans, string beans, and chicalyos were heaped up in three piles. As the harvesters emptied their bags and saw the mounds grow higher they praised the bounty of the earth.

Everybody harvested, young, old, children, grownups. Rosendo, perhaps a little slower than the others, was right in with them, and he seemed to them, not the mayor, but just a happy old farmer. Anselmo, the harpist, was sitting to one side on a little stone playing his instrument. The notes of the harp, the laughter of the voices, the rustling of the dry leaves, the crackling of the husks as the ears were stripped—all blended into the joyful hymn of the harvest. Girls carrying gourds went back and forth from the jars of chicha to the workers in the field, passing about the festive red drink. They were not too lavish with it, but still it ran through the veins, singing of its origin in the fermented corn made to gladden the heart of man. In the wake of the full-kerneled ears lay a lake of limp, pale husks.

And talking to one another were the boy, Juan Medrano, the son of one of the selectmen, and the girl Simona, whom Augusto had seen in the cow lot one morning. It was only two days now that they had been going together. But the afternoon came with its shimmering heat, and the penetrating exhalation of the earth mingled with that of the ripe plants. Juan was a branch and Simona a fruit and neither was more than twenty. They began to frolic about, moving away from the other harvesters. Simona ran, laughing over her shoulder, and Juan pretended that he could not catch her. Suddenly he caught her and they possessed one another with their eyes. At last he spoke:

"I'll bet I can throw you, girl."

"I'll bet you can't."

And they wrestled in fun for a while—Simona was strong—until they fell into the alfalfa. And the cornfield with its unending murmur, its ripe ears and yellow tassels, covered the joyous union of their brown bodies. Above them, harmoniously arched over the earth, shone a sky of dazzling blue. Simona's body discovered the joy of a man, and Juan, who had laid many a girl under the hedges and in the fields, felt

that call of the blood which makes a man select one woman among all others.

Afternoon was descending and the sun threw into profile the tassels of the corn and the bronzed faces. The shadow of Peana hill grew until it had engulfed the whole field. The task was over. The harvesters returned to the village. In the square the cauro was filled to the top and the heaps of beans were high.

The harp played on. A voice was heard singing. All were happy, and without even trying to understand why, they were living the truth of having asserted their mastery over the land, for the good of all; and over time, for work and for peace.

There was to be a roundup to bring in all the livestock so that they could eat up the stubble and the mares could be used in the threshing. The one who could hardly wait for this was Adrian Santos, Amaro's oldest son, who was born when his parents were hardly more than children themselves. His four brothers followed him in stairstep order, and now his parents had told him that he was a man. In spite of his ten or twelve years he had a good seat, and his lariat rarely missed. To him the roundup was like a benediction.

About fifty of the younger, stronger Indians went to Rosendo to get their orders. The mayor and the selectmen chose the groups of herders who were to search out every corner of the community land, so as not to leave a single cow or horse or donkey forgotten anywhere. Adrian Santos was unhappy because he had not been included with the others. The authoritative voice of the mayor called out the names:

"Cayo Sulla."

"Here!"

"Juan Medrano."

"Here!"

"Amadeo Illas."

"Here!"

"Antonio Huilca."

"Here!"

When he had called ten or fifteen he said:

"You go to the slope of Norpa."

He had named the group for the gulch of Rumi and its various hollows, for Peana hill, for Lombriz Creek and the land about it, for the Ocos River valley. Some were to go on foot and some on horseback, because not all of them knew how to ride and besides there were not enough horses.

The group that was to go to the plain of Norpa, which was covered with a thicket that meant hard riding, was the last. It seemed that Adrian's hopes were doomed to disappointment. His name had not been mentioned. But at the last moment Rosendo said to the group he had designated:

"The boy Adrian Santos is to go along with you too."

Just something thrown in, as if to say, "This doesn't really count." But it didn't matter.

"Oh, taita."

Adrian was going to hug the old man, but a sharp gesture of Rosendo's arm held him back, and he stood quietly to one side, learning Indian restraint.

He could not sleep for thinking about it, and when he heard the animals and the shouting in the barn lot, he dashed out and saw that all Rumi was preparing for the roundup. The fires gleamed on the women who were preparing the food and the men who were saddling, rolling up leather lariats, eating, mounting, and leaving. The only words spoken referred to animals or places. Rosendo and the selectmen were in the barn lot and Artidoro Oteiza, who was carrying his lariat rolled around his breast, told Adrian to catch the horse Ruano. The night was clear and in the sky hung a waxing moon.

Oteiza and Adrian set off at canter, but at a certain place in the road they had to separate, and the older man warned him:

"Watch out that you don't get lost in Iran. One road goes to Uyumi. Watch out you don't get lost."

"No, I won't get lost," Adrian called back confidently, as he gave

Ruano a slap with the reins.

And he went cantering along a path that winds about the foot of Peana. He crossed the bed of a brook that had gone dry, then through an opening in a fence and reached the slope of Tacual. The wind was blowing his poncho about. There were the shouts and whistles of Indians calling one another from hill to hill on their way to the pastures. In the moonlight the dry grass and the bare paths looked even more yellow.

He took a trail up the side of a hill that was covered with huge slabs of stone and came out by Piedras Gordas, a mass of huge black rocks which shut out the moon, where the shadows lay thick. Adrian recalled uneasily all the stories he had heard about strange meetings of devils and ghosts that took place in the dark canyon formed by these stones. To go around them would mean losing a great deal of time, and the others were probably already at Norpa; so he gave Ruano a smarting crack over the haunch, and the horse galloped through the black tunnel, which was shot through here and there with pale flickers of light, and whose silence was broken only by the loud beat of the horse's hoofs, and the rattle of stones. He did not stop galloping until he had reached the upstanding peak of Iran. The path, as it skirted an abyss, grew narrower, descending from one level to another, and had to be taken slowly. Adrian did not dismount and he thought it was quite a feat he was accomplishing. At the foot grew a thicket, and when he got there the boy discovered that, at night, all roads look alike, and he was probably taking the very one Oteiza had told him not to. The devil! He turned around and left the choice to Ruano, who started up the right road at an easy trot. There was another stone wall and another open gate.

Beyond it the trails separated, divided, came together again, twisted about, forming among trees and bushes a web woven by the hoofs of the herds. Ruano knew the way, and Adrian realized that he was a good pony and he began to take a liking to him. A chattering little brook carried along its thread of water, which acted as a guiding light in the darkness left by the setting moon. But the dawn was coming up and the peaks of the distant hills were already visible, those which arise on the opposite bank of the Oeros River and belong to several different ranches. As the sun was outlining the crests of the hills Adrian reached the foot of Norpa. All those Rosendo had assigned to this job were already there, on foot beside their shaggy ponies. Some had slipped off the bridle and the animals were nibbling at dry spears of grass. Several woolly dogs lay stretched out beside their masters.

Adrian greeted them and they all answered him indifferently without asking whether he had got lost in the woods of Iñan, or whether he had been able to ride down the cliff, or had to get off and walk; nor did they say a word about the diabolical cave of Piedras Gordas. And Adrian learned another lesson in Indian reserve.

"Is everybody here?" asked Antonio Huilca, the leader of the group.

"Everybody except Damian."

"He'll be along. Let's go."

There were fifteen riders with him. They had taken off their ponchos and laid them across the saddle like a blanket, and their shirts showed white against the morning mist. Antonio gave his orders quickly. The movement of the men's heels against the horses' sides excited them, and they arched their necks, eager to gallop off.

"You, Roberto, start over toward Ayapata and as soon as you meet Damian tell him he's to help you."

"All right."

Roberto loosened the rein on his heavy-maned gray and started off at a gallop. When he was a little way off Artemio Chauqui shouted after him:

"Roberto . . . come back . . . come back!"

Roberto swung around, pulling his horse up short with a sharp jerk of the reins.

"Man, I don't see how you're going to work," said Artemio.

"Why not?"

"Since you're only wearing one spur, your horse is only going to run on one side."

The group broke out into a hearty laugh, led by Roberto himself with a "Ha-ha-ha" which cracked like a quirt over the gray's haunches as it dashed off toward Ayapata at breakneck speed. The field was full of entangling arabiscos and thorny unegatos so it had to run carefully, even so. Some of the men wore chaps of deerskin.

"That's enough nonsense," said Antonio half-provoked, half-amused. "You three go over to Shango, you toward Puquio, and you, further

down the slope. I'll go the other way, and we're going to drive them toward the Norpa meadow."

In half an hour men and dogs were spread out over the broad, tangled slopes, driving the cattle toward the field. The cows would seldom come out of the hollows, and when they did they dashed up the winding hillside trails, to hide in the thickets. It was a real task to get them started. Then they would suddenly break again, and once more men and dogs had to run and gallop to get ahead of them and cut them off. Where the thicket dwindled away to bushes the men were able to swing their lariats over the horns of the wildest ones. Then some of the herders would lead the prisoners, and the others would drive in the rest to the place they had agreed on.

When the sun had climbed over the high hills and was burnishing the broad slopes of Norpa, there was a goodly herd in the meadow, a gathering point for the animals that bellowed and ran along the hillside, first here, then there, as though the earth were sprouting cows.

"Here . . . here . . . here!" shouted the herders and the cliffs.

No horses grazed on Norpa, for the pasture is dry in the summer and only the cows can live on the cactus, the underbrush, and the withered leaves.

They rounded up cattle the whole livelong day. Many cows tried to hide in the thick canebrakes where only the men and dogs could penetrate. They had to dismount and fire shots with their slings or get right into the brush and drive out the stubborn fugitives with a stick.

All of a sudden on the slope of Ayapata there appeared a wily, black bear pursued by several of the dogs. The men stopped work to watch the chase. The pack was soon increased by the other dogs that came running in from all sides. There were six shaggy dogs barking around the bear, who walked along, turning, twisting, calm, canny, never letting himself be caught off guard.

"Why didn't I bring my shotgun?" said one of the spectators. "It's always the same. When you don't have it along is when you see these devils. I can't figure out how you could carry it and leave it behind at the same time."

Juan Medrano was thinking about his old Peabody.

The bear got away, for the dogs harried it without getting very near.

One got too close, and the bear gave him a swat on the head with his paw, and the dog, with one short yelp, collapsed on the ground for good. The others became more furious and, at the same time, more cautious; they ran around the bear, barking; but when they finally lunged at him they did not quite bite him, but drew back, howling with rage and fear. The bear started downhill and began to descend the steep, red cliffs. This gave the dogs a chance to save their face, since the natural obstacles were insurmountable; so one by one they abandoned the chase, and finally the thick solitary bulk of the bear disappeared among the cactus and the chapulallas.

The roundup began again. By noon the sun was blistering hot on their backs, and the cows now covered a great space of the gray plain. Some sought the shade of the arabiscos. All that was left to do was to round up the stragglers, and beat the hiding places one last time. In the marshy canebrakes the aromatic cherimoyas were covered with flowers or fruit. It was not hard for the men to find ripe ones to take the edge off their hunger. From far, far away could be heard the echoes of other herders, working along the valley of the Ocos River, rounding up the wild asses. They were the ones that really had to work hard.

Several cows, coming down the hillside, tried to break away toward a distant gulch. If they managed to get in there it would be a mean job to get them out. So Adrian and three others spread out and started at a dead run to head them off and turn them back. Adrian took a little path that climbed over the rocks, and his horse sent down a shower of pebbles that hurtled dizzily over the slope. One of them, as round and large as a cherimoya, went bouncing from rock to rock without breaking.

"Watch out!"

The stone went whistling over the head of the pony Cayo was riding.

The cows started running faster and the herders followed them. Adrian was bent low in the saddle to protect his face with the brim of his straw hat from the thorny branches.

"Watch out! Watch out!"

More rocks? Adrian looked up and took in the situation at a glance. His horse was galloping toward a clump of enormous arabiscos, which would knock out Adrian's brains against the branches. It was too late to swing aside on the path that ran between unegatos, or to stop the

horse's headlong gallop. So Adrian threw out his arms and grasped the first thick branch and hung on. The horse dashed on and the boy was left clinging to the tree like a monkey. In the distance could be heard the laughter of the others who had the cows in hand and were bringing them in, while Adrian, attempting to show off his skill, was quietly getting down from the tree. His horse was waiting for him a little way off.

The great ruby sun was on the distant hills when the fifteen herders reached the plain with the last of the cows.

"We'll have to drive them into the gorge so they won't get away at night," said Antonio.

They herded them into a wide passage bordered by cliffs on either side, and then separated into two groups to keep watch at each end. Out of the saddlebags appeared gourds, dried beef, meal, and little pots. The pots were set up on three stones over the fires that burned brightly in the darkness which hung like a canopy over the gorge. Nearby the horses nibbled at the branches and the dogs watched intently, while, within the canyon, the cows moved restlessly back and forth, lowing and lunging at one another. Every once in a while several would come forward to see if they could break through and get away, but the herders and the dogs quickly saw their intention and drove them back to the herd with well-aimed stones and angry barking.

In the midst of the lowing and neighing, they ate their thick soup with the strips of dried beef they broiled over the fire and the parched corn they had brought along. In the center of the circle there was a delightful smell of fried chicken and the spicy odor of potato and rabbit stew which revealed the skill of a woman's hand. Afterward they prepared their wads of coca and divided up for the night watch. Ponchos and saddlepads were spread for beds. A pale clarity announced the rising of the moon. Their bodies were heavy with weariness. When one of the first watchers asked Amadeo Illas to tell them a story there was no answer. Amadeo was already asleep.

The next day the drive to the village was beset with the same or similar incidents as the roundup itself. Most of the cows had given up the struggle and walked along obediently, but the few wild ones made plenty of trouble. There was a moment when it seemed as though the whole herd was going to follow their bad example. The sun was setting when the rounded up herd, bright with sweat, noisy of hoof, and raising a cloud of dust, came down the main street. Villagers

stationed themselves along the way to close them in until they reached the cow corral. The variegated, moving mass filled the enclosure. Further on, crowded, too, were the corrals of mares and asses. Rosendo Maqui and the selectmen, standing on one of the thick stone walls, were talking over the operations. All the fences were crowded with observers. The children shouted and the girls watched not only the livestock but the virile herders who came in with their faces burned by the sun and the dew and their voices hoarse.

There were also present many herders from Umay and neighbors from Muncha who had been notified by Rosendo. They cut out and drove away the animals that belonged to them to turn them out in the stubble, give them salt, brand them, and break them. . . The residents of Muncha paid one sol a year for each animal that grazed the community lands. But Don Alvaro Amenabar had never been willing to pay a cent, alleging that it was the community's business to keep strange animals off its lands. However, he did not apply the same theory to his ranch. Whenever his herders found a strange animal on the Umay lands they fastened it up and the owner had to pay five soles—Don Alvaro's charge for a year's grazing—before he could get it back. To Rosendo Maqui this attitude was inconceivable, not only from the moral point of view but as an example of the ambition of a man who owned the land of half the province and did not even use it. So the "dry bladders" paid the mayor one hundred and eighty soles for their cows, donkeys, and horses, while the stock of Umay—some five hundred head—was driven away by herders who had looked the herds over carefully, without paying a cent, the same as every year.

Porfirio Medrano, who was beside Rosendo, remarked:

"The rich are always rich, and for all its weight, money never comes down. . ."

The mayor nodded his head and uttered one of those phrases for which he had long been famous:

"And if it does come down, it falls on the ground so that the poor man has to grovel to get it."

The corrals were pretty well thinned out and, aside from the work animals, there were not more than some thirty cows, twenty mares, and about the same number of she-donkeys. This was the community's breeding stock.

Considering how many they had rounded up, it was not much. But if

few for their needs there were enough for their hopes. Rosendo said:

"We won't sell any. We need the males for work and the females for breeding. We ought to have a hundred . . . With a hundred cows, even allowing for those that get killed or are eaten by the bears, or stolen, we can still sell about twenty a year, without falling behind with the breeding or the work. And the same with the other animals. That's where our money will come from. We're going to have a school now . . . and afterwards we'll send the best boys away to study . . . They may become doctors, engineers, lawyers, professors . . . God knows we Indians need someone to take care of us, teach us, and look after our interests. Who can stop us? Why can't we do it? We will. Other communities have done it. I won't see it . . . I'm too old now . . . But you, the selectmen, you do it. Don't you think it's a good thing? Who says it isn't? We must tell it to everyone. They will all understand."

The selectmen manifested their approval, and Goyo Auca's "That's right, taita" was even more reverent than usual.

Quite detached from this conversation and its lofty ideals, Augusto Maqui galloped by on his bay, whirling his rope after a running pony. He caught it and brought it to a stop with a quick, powerful jerk. Marguicha was on the wall, watching; she had forgotten all about Demetrio.

The gate in the stone wall surrounding the cornfields was opened and the stock was driven in. Crowding one another, horses, cows, and asses greedily began devouring the stubble. After a little they calmed down, and with an occasional bellow or a short neigh they evinced their satisfaction.

The sun had become wheat, and the wheat, sheaves. It was the harvest. An easy, sweet harvest over the dark blanket of the earth. The sickles were taken down from the eaves where they hung, and carried to the wheat field. As they cut they made a swishing noise, and the stiff stalks yielded and the ears swayed and trembled as they were carried to the threshing pile. The men disappeared from sight beneath their huge loads of sheaves, which looked as though they were moving by themselves. But talk and laughter went on under them. On the threshing floor the pile was growing higher, and, after they left their load the threshers took a swallow of chicha and returned where the others were chopping away at a wall that, instead of falling, kept

retreating. Now all the wheat was on the threshing pile. A high, round, golden pile was the testimonial of faith of these peasants, who had bent over the earth all year with a gesture that man has forgotten to attribute to God.

The next day came the threshing. The grain was piled up at the entrance to the village. Many Indians climbed up on the pile and threw the first layer of wheat down on the hard clay floor with their wooden pitchforks. The mares that were grazing in the stubble were brought in, and in a circle around the threshing floor stood all the villagers, men, women, children, holding on to a cord made of a number of lariats joined together. They made a living, multicolored fence. And the threshers, riding the best horses, drank the ration of chicha to warm them up and then leaped over the cord with their horses. The threshing had begun. The shouts, the galloping, the breaking up of the straw, and the beating out of the grain had begun. The harvest sun was there too. The sun solidified in the heap of grain, fell, and broke into fragments at the feet of those who were holding the cord. The chicha went from hand to hand in shiny gourds, for the refreshment of all. The riders shouted, the mares ran, the sun, the heart, the hills all took part in the threshing. The chicha, the colors, the shouting and the grain rejoiced the soul.

One of the threshers, the one with the clearest voice, gave a high, full shout, almost musical, "Uuuaaay," and the others, depending on their voice, answered in a lower tone, "Uaay" ... "Uooy" ... "Uaay" ... "Uooy" ... "Uaay" ... "Uooy," forming a chorus that rang through the hills. From time to time some of the riders came out and others went in to replace them with new energy and voices.

One of them, drunk with happiness and liquor, got off his horse and stood by, watching the threshing. One of his children, a little fellow, came over to ask him:

"Father, why do they shout like that, as though they were calling to one another, and answering?"

"That's our way of singing."

Yes, to those whom Nature has not blessed with a voice to sing huainos or with the gift to play instruments, once a year comes a chance to raise their voices in a hymn, a powerful, happy hymn. It was the hymn to the sun which had become ears of wheat and which now helped with the threshing. It was the hymn to the fruit which is the beginning and the end, the promise become grain, and the

annunciation in the simple miracle of the seed. The hymn to the creative force of the land and the rain and the tireless arms and the faith of the sower, beneath the majestic aegis of the sun. The hymn to the dynamic force that strips away straw and chaff to leave, full and generous, the bounty of life. A hymn to the true food, the sacred food of man, that is like the blood in his veins.

The pile had disappeared and the last round had been made on the threshing floor. The mares were led out and the Indians with their pitchforks threw the straw into the center of the ring, and the women, with large switch brooms swept even the last grain toward the center too. A low curving hill, on whose summit the twilight was melting away, announced that the task was finished. Already the cord had been dropped, the many-colored circle had broken up, the shouts had died away. And just as it seemed that the growing shadows of the night were about to throw a veil of sadness over everything, the pulsations of the harp and the humming of the rustic violins were heard, as were the melodies of the flutes and the reedy antaras. The snare drums rattled and the bass drum boomed deeply. People were eating and drinking. And later, in the darkness lighted by the stars and then by the gleam of the moon, the instruments played on and voices were raised in a dance. Men and women moved in joyous rhythm in the bodily dialogue of surrender and refusal which each couple carried on in the measures of the huaino.

The corn had been shelled and the wheat had been winnowed. The winnowing was long and slow, as was to be expected from the lazy wind that had to be called on for help.

"Wind, wind, wind . . . " pleaded the women with a sweet cry. The men called to it with a peculiar whistle, with many inflections at the start and ending up on a sharp, humming note like that of a bullet.

Every now and then the languid wind moved its big wings and the forks threw the grain toward the top of the fragile hill: the wind carried away the straw as the grain fell. When the heavier straw had been winnowed out, the pitchforks were changed for wooden shovels. The heap of grain grew higher as a rain of wheat fell on it from the air. The wind heaped up a pile of straw a little further off.

During the nights groups of villagers built bonfires of winnowed straw and roasted squashes in them. They talked gaily as they ate the sweet

slices, and then they contentedly chewed their coca while somebody told a story. Once Amadeo Illas was asked to tell one and he told the story called "The Rivals and the Judge." On a certain occasion he had told it in town and a gentleman who heard it said it contained a great deal of wisdom. Amadeo never thought of it in this light, because he did not know what wisdom was, and he told it only because he liked it. He had heard it from his mother, who was now dead, and she had learned it from a famous storyteller known as the Story Man.

Amadeo Illas was a handsome lad, with a smooth face, who always wore dark-red ponchos with blue stripes, which were woven by his wife, who was young, too. He had already made a name for himself as a storyteller, and some of the villagers, carried away by their enthusiasm, no doubt, said he was better than the oldest storytellers of Rumi. At any rate, he had many listeners. Here is the story he told this time:

There was once a toad who was very proud of his voice and he spent the night singing: toc, toc, toc ... And there was a katydid that was even prouder of her voice and she spent the whole night, and the whole day, too, singing: chirr, chirr, chirr.

One day they met and the toad said to the katydid:

"My voice is better than yours."

"Mine is better," the katydid answered.

They got into an argument which seemed as though it would never end. The toad said he sang all night. The katydid said she sang day and night. The toad said his voice carried further and the katydid said her voice could always be heard. They began to sing in turn: toc, toc, toc ... chirr, chirr, chirr. Neither one could convince the other.

So the toad said:

"Not far from here on the shore of a lake, lives a heron. Let's ask her to be the judge."

And the katydid said:

"Let's."

They hopped along and hopped along till they came to the heron. She was gray and stood there on one leg, looking into the water.

"Heron, can you sing?" called out the katydid.

"Yes, I can," answered the heron, looking at them out of the corner of her eye.

"Let's hear you sing. We want to hear you so we can name you judge," said the toad.

The heron had her own plans, and answered:

"And who are you to ask me for proofs? My singing is very delicate, you contemptible screamers. If you want my opinion, you may have it; if not, you can go on your way." And with a bored expression she stretched out her other leg.

"That's right," said the toad, "we have no reason to pass judgment on our judge."

"Heron, all we want you to do is to say which of us sings better," the katydid cried out.

"Then come over closer," the heron answered, "so I can hear you well."

The toad said to the katydid:

"Maybe it would be best for us not to get any closer and to let the whole thing go."

But the katydid was sure she would win and, carried away by vanity, she said:

"Oh, you know your voice isn't as good as mine and now you're afraid you're going to lose."

The toad became angry and said:

"All right, now you're going to hear some real singing." And he hopped away as fast as he could to the heron followed by the katydid. The heron turned around and said to the toad:

"Now sing."

The toad began to sing, paying no attention to anything, so sure was he of victory. In the meantime the heron ate up the katydid. When the

toad had finished the heron said:

"Now you two can go on with your argument in my crop," and she ate him too. And the heron, satisfied with herself, drew up one leg, and went on looking calmly at the water.

The group returned to the village and only Fabian Caipo and his wife remained out by the pile of wheat to see that it was not trampled down. The wheat field had been opened up, too, and day and night the stock wandered freely about the fields and village. Men and animals were living on terms of complete intimacy.

One night Marguicha and Augusto discovered that it was very nice on the big straw pile and they delayed their return. The night hour was beautiful. The large full moon, slow and round, lighted up the calm slopes, the sleeping village, the high hills, the far-off, solitary, snow-covered heights. A bird sang in the top of an elder tree. Beside the straw stack, a mare and a horse stood with their necks crossed over each other's. The tender love of the night had surely united Fabian and his wife under their improvised yellow shelter. And Augusto, without saying a word, drew Marguicha close and she gave herself to him, joyously yielding up her beautiful young body drenched with the moonlight.

The crop was divided up among the villagers, according to their needs, and the remainder was to be kept for sale.

Somebody had spilled a little wheat in the square, and Rosendo Maqui began to shout:

"Gather that wheat up, gather it up right away. I would rather see money thrown away than God's grain, our food, man's blessed nourishment."

Thus, once more, the corn and the wheat were garnered from the earth. They were the life of the community. They were the history of Rumi. Rosendo Maqui considered different events the history of his

people, because for him the earth was life itself and not its memories. This history seemed very full. But these events had been spread over fifty, a hundred, two hundred years or more—many of the things he knew only by hearsay—and the life of the community had taken on a character of peace and uniformity and had acquired its real meaning in the cultivation of the earth. Sowing, plowing, reaping were the true pivotal point of its existence. The wheat and the corn—"blessed nourishment"—had become symbols. Just as other men build their structures upon positions, honors, arts or finances, it was upon the earth and its products that the villagers of Rumi built their hopes. And for them the earth and its products were, first of all, a creed of brotherly love.

6

Benito Castro

He rode toward the south, face against the wind, against fate. The wind was an old friend of his and, as it blew past, it caressed his tanned skin. Fate was behaving like a bucking horse and he was leaving home and riding, riding to see if he could break it. Any thought of return was an invitation to disaster. But it was sweet to think of returning. Especially at this season of the year with the wheat ripe and the corn ready to be husked. The villagers would be threshing, shouting, dancing. Rumi missed him, too, and in the days that followed the harvest they spoke of his absence, and nobody, nobody knew where he was. It was sad. Benito Castro felt alone and forlorn, and on the long road his horse—a former member of the community—comforted him in his loneliness.

"This is our fate. Patience, my pony!"

Abram Maqui had taught him to break horses. It was a good thing that Augusto seemed to like it too. When he left he was starting to learn, trying to manage not to be thrown. It was good to have a horse like Lucero. Lucero was white, steady, without being stupid. He had named him for the morning star. When he patted him on the neck, the horse would rub his head against Benito's shoulder. They had ridden a long way together and the miles bring intimacy. They crossed several provinces and did not stop until they reached the foothills of Huamachuco.

Benito Castro got work as a herder on a ranch. It was the same old story, the same road that led to the slough of poverty, but it did not matter. He had to do something and he did it. Carnival time came around and the ranch hands got ready to celebrate. In the morning a tree was set up, an umshe, covered with fruits—oranges, bananas, mangoes, mamey apples—and other attractive things: colored bandannas, small mirrors, bottles of Florida water, a knife or two, and some whistles. The bottles were tied to the trunk so that the branches would protect them. Men and women joined hands to form a ring and marched around the tree. The fruits on it swayed gently and the many objects glittered and caught the eye brightly. It was a beautiful tree. A man who was standing at the foot of it, with a green flag in his hand, began to march around the tree, too, but counter to the group, singing

funny verses in a loud voice:

At last carnival has come—
Guayay, silulito!
The feast of the hungry,
Like me!

This was the dance called silulo. After every verse came the chorus:

One and two,
And three, there it is, there it is!
Four and five,
And six, I turn again!

And with this he turned in the opposite direction and all those in the ring did the same. It was fun. Then the singer went on, saying over and over:

Now I say it, I am going to say it!
Now I say it, I am going to say it!

The dancers in the ring waited, excited and happy, till he called out:

"Choose your partner!"

Then the chorus broke up into couples and, as the number of dancers was uneven, there was always one left without a partner. This one had to take an ax, go over to the tree, and chop off some chips. The first one that was left out was Benito, who had no girl friends; but when he had given the tree a few blows with the ax a good-looking girl, not too young, came over to him.

"I'll be your partner, Don Benito, so you won't be left out again. . . ."

The march continued and so did the song:

I like the brave men
Guayay silulito!
Who with huge knives
Silulo!
Go into the barnyard—
Guayay silulito!
And shout, "Death to the turkeys!"
Silulo!

Everybody laughed and speculated about when the tree would fall.

Many, as a joke, left their partners and rushed in to take a whack at the tree. The one who brought it down had to put up the tree the following year. Finally it fell, and everybody, pushing, falling, and shrieking with laughter, rushed at it. Benito was strong and he managed to get a bottle of Florida water, two handkerchiefs, and a knife. He gave everything except the knife to his partner who was called Juliana. She told him she was single and lived with a married sister. And he told her that he was all alone and had happened to come there looking for work.

"Poor fellow. No woman to look after him and he has to work," said the girl.

Everything was going along fine, but in the afternoon there was a cock race. The person who arranged it had announced that there was to be a prize of thirty soles, and the event had attracted many contestants and spectators. The hired hands and their family were lined up before the house of the master of ceremonies. Between two tall posts ran a rope fastened to a pulley, and in the middle of the rope hung a small, strong basket, made of strips of pliable wood and covered with a tightly fastened, heavy cloth. On one side the head of a cock was barely visible. A man who stood at the foot of the post with the pulley on it manipulated the rope. The master of ceremonies came over to the group of onlookers and shouted:

"There are thirty soles in the basket. Who wants to see if he can win it? The course is around that hill as far as those eucalyptus trees...."

Ten riders came forward, showing off their horses' accomplishments to overawe one another. Benito said to himself: "Thirty soles? I'm going to try out my Lucero." The one holding on to the rope jerked it to move the basket, and the money in it clinked tantalizingly. The cock from time to time gave a frightened squawk. Bets were shouted out. And the riders worked up the horses, running them short distances, to get the lay of the land. It was rolling and there was a slope to climb before rounding the hill to the eucalyptus trees and then back down the slope to the starting place.

Just at this moment the owner of the ranch with his wife and daughters arrived to watch the joust. One of the daughters looked at Benito and said with a smile:

"You're going to be the winner."

Benito hoped she was right, but he wasn't sure. There was a tall half-

breed riding a big, spirited chestnut horse, who looked meaningly at the man with the rope. And the contest began. The riders lined up at a certain point and then set off at a gallop down the lane of spectators. The basket was within arm's grasp, but just as the rider reached out to grab it the man with the rope gave a sharp jerk which raised it out of reach. At first he allowed no opportunity to reach it so as to make the celebration last longer. Then he eased up a little. The rider had to be quick, have a good eye, and calculate carefully so as to be able to grab the basket while galloping at full speed. Its stout handle was tied to the rope by a string that could be broken. The riders rode under it over and over again, the horses' hoofs ringing on the hard ground; the cock seemed to fly up, the money clinked, the spectators shouted, and the betting increased.

"Three soles on the one who's riding the white horse."

"I'll take you."

"Eight soles on the chestnut."

"I'll take you."

Several of the riders managed to get their hand on the basket. The rider of the chestnut horse did it more often than any of the others. Everybody shouted each time he galloped toward the cock:

"Now!"

Until, finally, he really did pull the basket off. He jerked it loose and kept on galloping and all the other riders after him. Two dropped out almost at the start, but the others were catching up with him in spite of everything. He lost distance as he rode down a hollow, he made it up as he came out, and then he lost it again going up the hill. His pursuers raised a cloud of dust as they closed in on him. The spectators shouted, although the riders, so far away, could not hear them:

"The chestnut!"

"The white!"

"Hurry!"

The winner swung around the hill alone, but a man riding a black horse closed in on him and grabbed the basket. They could be seen struggling together while galloping at full speed until the black horse's

rider slipped out of the saddle, fell, and had to let go. In the struggle the rider of the chestnut had lost ground, and the others were almost up with him as they rounded the eucalyptus trees and started down the slope. Three of the horses in their headlong rush slipped and it seemed as though their riders might have been hurt, but they got to their feet and started after their mounts. Some of the others, seeing themselves outdistanced, gave up the contest. The only ones left were the leading rider on the chestnut, Benito Castro on his white, and a man on a cinnamon-colored horse.

Going downhill almost all horses are the same, and the white horse caught up with the chestnut. They reached the level ground at the same time, and before he lost this advantage Benito cut in and grabbed the basket. The half-breed gave him a look like a flash of lightning, and pulled back with a violent jerk. They both had plenty of strength and they felt it from their feet to the top of their heads. They were panting, swaying, squeezing their horses tightly, and leaning out of the saddle to get a better grip. The horses ran neck and neck until suddenly, in a surprise move, Benito gave his reins a tug and his horse turned to the right and the other rider, caught off his guard, slipped out of the saddle and fell to the ground. He tried to hang on, but Benito urged his horse on and his rival had to let go of the basket to keep from being dragged over the prickly pears that grew beside the road. The sole remaining contestant managed to draw near, but he did not make much of an effort to get hold of the basket and Benito Castro rode triumphantly between the posts, greeted by shouts and cheers. The head of the cock hung limp from the cage. Everybody said it had been a fine race, very fast, with two tussles and three falls, and the rancher himself came over to the winner and gave him a bill, saying:

"It's arms like these I want on my ranch."

Juliana brought Benito some chicha and the two of them, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, ripped off the cover of the basket. There were the thirty soles in cash, and, for good measure, a dead cock.

The losers came cantering in and as soon as Benito took a look at the rider of the chestnut he knew the contest was not finished. The man was livid, and his eyes, when he looked at Benito, were so red with fury that they were like clots of blood. He would not have any trouble finding an excuse to make trouble, for there was to be a dance that evening. Rosendo had said to Benito:

"If I deserve anything of you, I want to ask you to promise me one thing: don't look for trouble."

He had promised, and here he was headed for a fight beyond the shadow of a doubt, and nobody ever knows how a fight may end. Who knows but what that knife he won on the tree was an omen? Once more he would be a fugitive, even though it was not his fault. In any case, his horse needed to rest a while, so he went to the bunkhouse where he lived, unsaddled and turned it out to pasture. Then he went after Juliana:

"Let's go, I am getting bored here."

And she, her woman's instinct telling her what was wrong, said to him:

"Are you afraid to fight?"

Benito would have liked to beat his rival in front of her, but afterward he realized that it was foolish to take chances just to impress a silly woman. When it got dark, he saddled and, though the idea that they might think him a coward annoyed him, nevertheless he left. Toward the south, farther and farther away. . . .

Nothing happened to him for several years, except going from place to place. And always it was poorly paid work. It was not that he did not seek something better. All ranches are the same; at all they pay enough to exist on but not to live on. Sometimes they would give him a horse to break and that paid twenty soles; but it did not often happen, for the country people always looked on him as a stranger and they were afraid one day he might go off with the horse.

In this way he crossed the Andes in the Department of La Libertad, carrying many landscapes in his eyes, and a dull pain within that was beginning to darken his life. Occasionally women loved him a little in the reckless orgies of village fairs. He could not even remember them. He did remember a long, steep, hard trail called "Get-out-if-you-can." He and Lucero thought they knew a good bit about trails, but it was on this one that they really learned.

He also remembered a little town called Mollepatá, in a region where there was good clay, and where all the inhabitants were potters. In the yards of the houses, in the village square, on all the level spots in the neighborhood there were pitchers, jugs, dishes, and pots of clay, in all shapes and sizes drying in the sun. It was a strange world of smooth, round forms. Before their houses sat the dwellers of Mollepatá, in front of little wheels and great piles of black clay, busy with their work. On the outskirts of the village the dried objects were fired and it

was this that gave them their reddish color. Afterward they packed them into big baskets between layers of straw and carried them to the towns in slow donkey caravans. He also remembered . . . well, many little commonplace things.

One day, without having really planned it, he came to the famous Huaylas Valley in the Department of Ancash. On one side ran the Black Range, with its dark peaks and its metal bowels, and on the other side the White Range, higher, crowned with glittering perpetual snows, and so steep that there were only a few little passes where men could get through. Huascaran, the inaccessible, lorded over all. A Yankee woman, Miss Peck, had managed to climb one of the lower peaks about this time, and it had been named Peck's Peak. What a man that woman was!

And between these ranges, too vast for the eye to behold, so long that it would take many weeks to traverse it, stretched the valley of Huaylas. It was full of gorges, slopes, ranches, cities, towns, villages, and Indians. The scenery was beautiful and the life of man very sad. The Indians spoke Quechua and a few, Spanish. They all worked for the ranchers or the wealthy townsfolk. The work was harder than in the north and the wages were lower. Now he had to find something to do. He cut sugar cane on one plantation, wheat on another, and looked after the horses on another. The only good thing was that Lucero fattened up on the good alfalfa.

Once, a herd of cows disappeared from a grazing field and two Indians who worked on the ranch were arrested. They were put in a stone pigsty full of mud and filth, and, during the night, the rancher and five herders brought them to a shed. Benito Castro saw it all from a room nearby where he slept. It was a bright night, the stars were huge, but the hearts of the masters were very black. They all wore revolvers in their belts, and they whipped them out and stuck them in the teeth of the terrified Indians.

"Confess."

The Indians could hardly talk, for the revolver barrels were against their tongues.

"We in town, taita, we not robbing. Who be dirty thieves?"

The owner said to one of the herders:

"If they won't talk, use the sticks."

The herder, a fat, coarse man, his little eyes barely visible in his heavy face, pulled out a bundle of little sticks and put them between the fingers of one of the Indian's hands. Somebody held his other hand.

"Squeeze."

The herder squeezed with both hands, and the Indian, writhing with pain, howled and screamed. The very night seemed to whimper with fear. Finally they let him go. And the other Indian, under the threat of the revolvers leveled at him, stretched out his trembling hand and was tortured in turn. Even the stones seemed to grieve, but their tormentors were unmoved.

"Will you confess, now? If you don't it will be worse for you."

Some dogs began to bark in the distance. The owner said:

"I'll give you tonight and tomorrow to think it over."

"Taita," the Indians kept repeating, "we away from our houses for go to town selling tiles. We no steal."

Benito heard the owner growl:

"Think it over carefully: if you don't confess, tomorrow we'll hang you up by the balls."

He left sputtering with rage and the herders put the Indians back in the pigpen, locking the door with a bolt and a heavy padlock. When their steps had died away in the distance, Benito came out of his room and crept quietly over to the door of the cell. The Indians were groaning and saying:

"Does it still hurt?"

"Yes, my hand swollen."

"Mine, too."

"What bad luck! We sell three soles' worth of tiles, and now we'll be punished as thieves."

Benito Castro did not hesitate. He found a piece of iron, and pried the lock open. And the night opened in all its brightness to the flight of the Indians and his own.

And so, always heading south, against wind and destiny, seeing once more the ripe wheat that brought sweet memories of the community, one day he reached a place called Pueblo Libre. He had bought a bale of alfalfa and was standing at one corner of the square, feeding Lucero. All of a sudden he heard far-off shouts which gradually drew nearer and grew louder. Finally a tumult of men and the shouts of a demonstration of some sort poured out of one of the side streets.

"Who are they?" he asked a half-breed standing near him.

"Pajuelo and his supporters . . . It's a month he's been here. He wants to organize the people and fight against injustice."

"Not a bad idea," said Benito.

And, leading his horse, he walked over to the big crowd that had drawn up in front of the town hall. When he got there, a dark man, about thirty years old, in a worn, dark suit but wearing a necktie, climbed up on a box to make a speech. He straightened up, looking around to all sides, and then fixed his eyes on his supporters, all half-breeds and Indians in ponchos, and began:

"My dear comrades! I hope you will overlook the fact that I am not really an orator. All I want to do is to express with my heart what I feel toward the humiliated, insulted common people to whom I belong. I am that same child, now become a man, part-Indian, part-white, who was born in Hueyrapampa, a few miles from here, in the humble adobe of a miner and a seamstress.

"When I reached the age of reason the first thing I noticed was the injustice that reigned over the poor, defenseless dwellers of my beloved town, in spite of the fact that it was called Pueblo Libre. Where did that injustice come from? Simply from bad government, the product of the complicity of the bosses and the eternal despoilers of the country who, for the misfortune of our people, still exist under the names of governors, mayors, judges and tax collectors.

"These who wear the mask of authority are nothing but wolves in sheep's clothing, and every day they eat deeper into the moral and material tissues of our race. These authorities are exploiters themselves and also the unquestioning instruments of our exploitation by the powerful. The districts are the cells of our national being, in which the germs of evil are incubated. I am sure that if in each little

town we can do away with the evil, root and branch, we will become a real democracy of justice and liberty—"

"Bravo!"

"Long live Pajuelo!"

Still more shouts and applause followed. The speaker, whose silhouette stood out sharply against the whitewashed wall, waited until they died down and went on:

"As I said, in my childhood I suffered all the injustices of this district in my own person and that of my aged parents; and, being unable to protect myself and alleviate to some extent the sufferings of those of my class, I decided to leave my home, in the face of the insulting idleness of the rich and the powerful. But I carried away an oath inscribed on my heart that I would return some day prepared to challenge these enemies of my people. This oath, always to be on the side of the weak and never on the side of the powerful, I have tried to carry out in the different towns through which I have traveled, an outcast of fortune. This is why, when I managed to establish myself in the capital of the province, I did not throw in my lot with the rich and the mighty, though I had a chance to. I preferred to ruin myself economically, and fight and defend the poor. But I want you to notice one thing: Look at the traitors to our cause who live with the rich, making themselves the willing instruments of oppression of their own class, without remembering that they were human offscourings like ourselves, and are in a different position only because of their meanness and servility. These are the ones who should be branded, so that there may be no confusion within our ranks; and you should know who they are better than I, for I have been away—"

"That's right, that's right."

"Down with the traitors!"

"We want no informers!"

And Pajuelo, more emphatic and sure of himself, a thing that happens to all orators when their public is with them, went on:

"My dear brothers, you will always find me at your side, ready to fight to the end to recuperate our rights which have been besmirched by the hands of criminals. The most immediate problems that confront us are those of the water, the land and the mines, which are the sources of immense wealth. I am going to speak of the problem of the water.

"In this district the matter of the distribution of water rights is unfair and we see that the neighboring ranch of Masma, which belongs to one of the many rich men who have monopolized the agricultural wealth of our district, has taken possession of half the water service, leaving only fifty per cent of it for the town and the vicinity. And what is more, on the days the ranch uses the water, it takes the very last drop of this indispensable element in the lives of our people; and on the days when it is the town's turn, the ranch very carefully insists on having water for its animals. This means that the miserable profits of this ranch are worth more than all the life of the town—"

"Bravo!"

The applause that greeted this was deafening. The group had become a multitude. When he began to talk about the water those who, up to that point, had been listening skeptically from the outskirts crowded closer to listen and then applauded. Benito and his horse were surrounded by the crowd. And Pajuelo, his necktie rumpled, one lock of black hair falling across his forehead, gesticulating with both hands, one of which was closed into a fist which left free an accusing forefinger, went on more vehemently:

"Because of the ambition and injustice of the owners of Masma, the people of this town and the surrounding countryside have to collect water for fifteen days out of the month in wells that are not properly built, and then use this stagnant water which is full of microbes. That is the reason for the sickness and premature death of the unhappy inhabitants. We can blame the owners of Masma for the injustice that exists even in the matter of the water. Masma Ranch has not only monopolized the water, but the land as well, smothering with its shadow the development of the sons of this town who might have become great. We must endeavor—"

A shot rang out, nobody knew from where, and Pajuelo fell face forward on one of the nearest listeners. The multitude cried out:

"They've killed Pajuelo!"

"Who did it?"

"Who did it?"

"He's dead."

"He's only wounded."

The crowd melted away and only a few remained beside the wounded man who had been laid on the ground. Blood was flowing from his breast and staining his shirt. He said:

"Take me to my mother's house. Long live the people!"

At that moment the governor of the district appeared, followed by a large group of armed men, who arrested all those who were still there and took them to jail, with the exception of Pajuelo, who was sent to his home under the custody of a guard. Benito Castro was taken in too.

The next day the prisoners were removed to the capital of the province, charged with subversive activities. A special detail of mounted police and a number of armed civilians took charge of them during the trip. At the end of three months the only one of them still in prison was Benito Castro, who had neither money nor influence in the region to help him. Besides, the fact that he was a stranger made him suspect. They had questioned him several times. One afternoon the subprefect had him brought to his office again:

"So you're not from this part of the country?"

"I'm from Mollepatá."

Mollepatá was far enough away.

The subprefect looked him through and through. Firm jaw, dark, piercing eyes, a full mouth under a stiff little black mustache. His chest was broad and his hands large. His hat tilted to one side and his poncho thrown over his shoulder gave him a dashing air.

"You're not bad looking, but you certainly look like an insolent rascal."

"Sir, I live at peace with everybody."

"Did you know Pajuelo? They say you were one of his followers and that you came here with him."

"No, sir, I was giving my horse some alfalfa, and I asked a man that was standing by me who that was and he said it was Don Pajuelo—"

"But do you believe in what he says?"

"I can't say, because I don't know what he was talking about; I'm not familiar with things around here."

"You are a smooth one. What are you doing around here?"

The subprefect was white and fairly young. He was wearing riding clothes to give the impression that he was pursuing the subversive elements, that is to say, the terrible destructive hordes of Pajuelo's followers. He was trying as hard as he could to involve this man, who had no one to befriend him, so that he could hand over at least one malefactor to the law.

"I was waiting here for Don Mamerto Reyes to drive some cattle to the coast."

Benito knew this drover only by sight, but he decided to take a chance, for, if he told the truth, they would make inquiries at the ranch where he had released the Indians, and then nobody could make them believe he was not in with Pajuelo.

"From the looks of you, I don't believe you've even seen the coast."

"I've been all the way to Huarmey—pure sand, sir. While we were loading the cattle for Lima one cow fell into the sea and the crazy thing started swimming, thinking she could make it to the other shore, till finally she realized where she was and turned back. . . ."

This was a story he had heard a herder tell, and he repeated it without very much confidence.

"M-hm," said the subprefect dubiously.

He looked down at his table for a while and then at a shelf full of papers.

Benito went on to complain:

"And, sir, I don't even have food. I've used up all my money and I can't buy anything. There's one policeman who's sort of good-hearted and he sometimes gives me the scraps that are left. Sometimes one of the Indians gives me a little gourd full of corn . . . But whole days go by when I don't have anything to eat."

"Well, that's what you get for trying to start trouble. I'm going to find out just how you stand. Ramirez!"

A pale young man in a cotton suit came in. He was the secretary of the subprefecture.

"Find out if the telegraph line goes through the District of Mollepatá. If it does, wire the governor, and ask him for information about this man who says that's where he comes from. What is your name? Oh yes, Manuel Caceres."

The secretary went out and the subprefect began to read and sign some papers and Benito cursed his own stupidity. The first thing that had come into his mind was Mollepatá. He should have said some out-of-the-way ranch. Now he was in a fix. . . .

The secretary came back:

"No, sir, it doesn't go through there. The nearest place where there is a telegraph station is thirty miles away."

"Hm . . . Well, then, ask the police if the cattle drover, Mamerto Reyes, is in the town or anywhere around."

The secretary went out again. Benito was very low in his mind. It was perfectly plain that they were trying to find something against him. Now everything would come out and they could pick up his trail and they might even trace him clear back to Rumi . . . The minutes went by.

"Sir," said the secretary coming in again, "they say they haven't seen Don Mamerto in town or even in the country . . . He's probably in some other province."

"Here's a liar that has luck."

"Sir," spoke up the secretary officiously, "it might be better to wait a few days. The people from Mollepatá are sedentary folk—potters who stay at their work. This fellow is lying. Besides, any day now Don Mamerto Reyes will show up."

"Yes, that's what I think."

Benito answered hotly:

"I got tired of making pots, for the neighborhood is full of them and people want them for nothing. If you try to go to towns any distance away, the trips take a long time and the pots get broken. I wanted to better myself, and here I get arrested and have to starve in the bargain."

The subprefect and the secretary were turning the matter over in their

minds. Benito looked through the bars of the window. Outside lay the square, the wide blue sky which surely looked down on better places than this, people going and coming along the cobbled streets, freedom . . . He went on:

"What am I to do now? Of course Don Mamerto will hire somebody else . . . I've lost my job, I haven't a cent, and I'm hungry."

The subprefect showed himself to be a man who believed in justice.

"All right, I'm going to release you, but you get out of town. I want no agitators in my province."

Benito continued:

"Sir, the police took my horse off with theirs the day they brought me in. Will you please order them to return it to me?"

The subprefect hit the table a blow with his fist.

"What horse? Did you give me any horse to keep? Ask them for it. And get out of here fast, before I change my mind about releasing you, and take some of that insolence out of you."

Benito walked out slowly and asked the good-hearted policeman about his horse. The man let out a laugh and told him he must be really crazy if he thought he could get his horse back from the subprefect.

So Benito left. There he was in the street with his liberty. Walking is hard when you are hungry. The streets opened before him one after another, but he did not know where to go. And he was hungry. . . .

He had a bad time as a hand on the ranches. He thought of Rumi and it made him feel badly, and he thought of Lucero, his last friend, and he felt still worse. And what a difference between the work on the ranches and the work they did in the community. In Rumi the Indians worked willingly, laughing, singing, and the day's duties were a pleasure. On the ranches the men worked sadly, laggingly, and they seemed stepchildren of the earth. If they had strength, they had no heart for anything.

Time went on. Benito Castro, never suspecting the serious things that

were taking place in Rumi, was working with a hundred Indians on a farm, bent over the furrow in the soaking rain. The Indians' huts were some distance away, and while the work in the field lasted they slept in a shed. As Benito had no home he lived in this shed all the time, and in this way he came to know many Indians from different parts, for the ranch was a very large one. The Indians spoke Quechua, but, as a rule, they talked very little. Benito picked up the language, which at times sounds like an angry wind, and, at others, like water running underground, and he came to understand their sad speech.

They seldom told stories. They talked of their work and, at times, of the revolution. In hushed tones, in the middle of crowded circles, the oldest ones told of Atusparia's revolution.

It was about the year 1885. The Indians were groaning under the yoke. They had to pay a poll tax of two soles twice a year, and they had to do free "work for the Republic," building roads, barracks, cemeteries, churches, public buildings. And the rich were wiping out the communities, the ayllus. The Indians had to work for nothing to be allowed to exist. They had to suffer in silence. No, masters, a day will come . . . They presented a protest to the prefect of Huaraz. No attention was paid to this. Pedro Pablo Atusparia, the mayor of Marian and of the district of Huaraz in Restauración, the first signer of the protest, was put in prison, beaten, and mistreated. Fourteen mayors came to protest against this injustice. They, too, were put in prison, beaten, and mistreated. No, masters, a day will come. . .

They pretended to give in. And on the first of March the Indians came down to Huaraz carrying bales of straw to thatch a roof that was "work for the Republic." At a given moment they pulled out of the bales the machetes and iron bars that were hidden in them and the fight was on.

The first waves of Indians were thrown back. A squadron of cavalry charged them, making an opening in their ranks. Encouraged by this success the soldiers attacked Pumacayan, an Inca fortress with steep, receding galleries. It had beautiful stone walls with bas-reliefs of coupling pumas, and the prefect of Huaraz was having it torn down to use the stone for building a cemetery and some private houses. Pumacayan was defended by the Indian Pedro Granados and a handful of braves. Granados, alone, armed with a leather sling with which he threw stones the size of a man's head, killed sixty horsemen. The squadron withdrew and Huaraz was besieged. The next day it fell. The Indians drank the blood of the brave soldiers to augment their own bravery. They wanted to make an end of all the rich and their families

who had shut themselves up in their houses.

Atusparia, the leader of the revolt, was opposed to this.

"I want no crimes. I want justice."

The revolution spread. The Indians, covered with sheepskins, crept along on all fours to attack Yungay by surprise. The whole valley of Huaylas revolted. All the towns were taken. In some the rich organized "city guards" and defended themselves bravely. Other great Indian leaders arose. There was Pedro Cochachin, a miner whom they called Uchcu Pedro because uchcu means cavity or mine. He was very bloodthirsty, and always at odds with kind Atusparia. There was Jose Orobio, the White Condor, so called because his skin was white, though beardless. And Angel Bailon, the brother-in-law of Atusparia, in command of the ranches where the movement began. And Pedro Nolasco Leon, descended from the chiefs of Sipsa. And many others. Strong, powerful, brave as pumas, restrained by the magnanimity of Atusparia who made them respect the women and children of their conquered adversaries, they led their troops to battle. They won. The Indians had a few rifles, forty cases of dynamite, and eight barrels of powder that Uchcu took out of the mines. He took command of the important passes of the Black Range. He was the strongest of all. The rest had to use iron bars and machetes. They sent messengers to the Departments of La Libertad and Huanuco, asking for help, asking them to join the revolution. But the battalions of the government were already there with good rifles and cannon. The Indians died like flies. To save ammunition they shot the Indian prisoners in files six deep. The leaders were captured and they, too, were shot.

While they were beating Jose Orobio, who was viciously shot at again and again, he said sarcastically:

"A little more, master, a little more."

The fierce Uchcu Pedro bared his buttocks contemptuously to the firing squad. Atusparia, wounded in the leg in the fight at Huaraz, fell and over him fell the corpses of his guard. They defended him with their dead bodies. There he was found by a white man who knew the meaning of gratitude and who hid him in his house. Some time afterward a council of the Indians condemned Atusparia to death as a traitor and made him drink poisoned chicha. He drank it serenely, lifting his cup to the four corners of the horizon and calling on time to be his judge. And he died. And time, the unimpeachable judge, says of him that he was not a traitor but a brave, generous man.

So the Indians talked by night under the shed, worn out by the hard days' work. They recalled the victories more than the defeats. And the night was filled with happy and tragic emotions, with the accounts of almost legendary heroes, powerful, astute fighters. They were unconquered and any day the revolution might break out again.

But sleep came and after that the day. The voice of the foreman was heard. The heroes disappeared, the epic battles were no more. And the Indians, scourged by reality, their faith broken, their visions faded, marched off to the fields and bent over the furrow. Benito Castro, poor and defenseless like them, took his spade and bent his back, too.

7

The Trial

Don Alvaro Amenabar y Roldan, lord of Umay, master of lives and lands for twenty leagues around, raged when he heard the news of Bismarck Ruiz's answer, and the high-flown language in which it was couched. With the letter in his hand he walked out of his office to the broad arch-trimmed porch of the house, shouting to the servants; but almost at once he recovered his composure, assuming the stern air of the important man whom nothing upsets or frightens. But his shouts had been heard, and the servants stood about trembling.

"Saddle Montonero for me and tell Braulio and Tomas they are to come with me. They'd better pick strong horses. Right away."

Montonero was a little skittish, but very strong. Braulio and Tomas, two herders of the many who also acted as bodyguards, lived with their families in the other houses that formed the big white and red rectangle of the Umay ranch house. At the foot of the old eucalyptus in the court, with its broad seamed trunk and its blue-green and reddish leaves, the servants saddled the horse, and Don Alvaro left with a brief good-bye to his wife and children. At the entrance to the ranch where a gate of stout bars creaked heavily Braulio and Tomas were waiting. The two men were dark and strong; they were mounted and carried rifles. They set out at a gallop along a straight road bordered with pleasant poplars, under the warm, friendly sun. On the slopes of the hills that encircled the plain, smoke was rising from the cabins of some of the tenant farmers beside their scanty fields. And the farmers, seeing the three men galloping along in the distance, said:

"There goes Don Alvaro with two bodyguards."

"What mischief are they up to?"

The rancher had his eyes fixed on the road and his thoughts fixed on the dispute over the boundary. They left the poplar grove and took the winding trail that led to the uplands. His eyes devoured the trail and his thoughts darkened his white face to a sullen red.

Don Alvaro was the son of Don Gonzalo, a determined person, who got hold of Umay nobody knows exactly how through a lawsuit with a convent. After a thorough consideration of the heiresses to the neighboring ranches, he fell madly in love with Paquita Roldan, an only daughter, and he married her. And the property of both of them increased. Don Gonzalo was hardworking, unscrupulous, and clever. He knew when to spend money freely and when to grasp his rifle firmly.

Umay grew, toward the south, engulfing ranches, villages, and communities. It grew until it reached the boundaries of Morasbamba, the ranch of the Cordovas. Don Gonzalo started a suit over boundaries and attempted to snatch a piece. But it did not work. The Cordovas were strong, too. When Don Gonzalo rode up with his men, the judge, the subprefect, and a group of mounted police to take possession, they were received with a volley of shots.

The struggle lasted, off and on, for two years. The subprefect, powerless to intervene or even admonish the ranchers, asked the prefect of the department for orders and reinforcements. The prefect was afraid to undertake to bring two such powerful men to heel on his own authority, and asked Lima for instructions. And Lima, where both the litigants had great influence among the ministers, senators, and congressmen, answered never a word. So in the hills between Umay and Morasbamba the fighting and killing went on. The Cordovas imported a first-class shot from Spain, a native of the Pyrenees, and they built a stone fort with loopholes where they stationed men under his command.

Don Gonzalo, who was stubborn but, nevertheless, levelheaded, yielded for the time being. The struggle was preventing him from attending to his other duties, and he decided to wait for a more propitious moment to take over possession of the property which is mine by law. He would make himself more powerful and Lima would have to back him up. So he began to spread out toward the north. But death carried him off, and Don Alvaro inherited, to the last jot and tittle, his ambition, his plans for power, and his rivalry with the Cordovas. Don Alvaro soon showed that he was a man of prey, and the advance continued.

Until finally his land extended as far as Rumi, which lay in his path, a defenseless, unsuspecting quarry. Busy with his other conquests, he had paid no attention to it for many years. Now it would seem that its turn had come. Don Alvaro brought suit over the boundaries. . . .

The rancher dismounted before the house of the pettifogging Iniguez, alias Spider, a perfect example of the small-time lawyer of the provincial capitals. He had been through the third year of law school at the University of Trujillo, and this gave him from the start a prestige which he took good care to back up with an abundance of legal hocus-pocus. In contrast to Bismarck Ruiz, his closest rival, he was small and skinny. He suffered from numerous ailments, and was unable to share in the town's opportunities for enjoyment. He ate gruel, drank medicinal waters, and his wife pined. Iniguez spent his time in his office surrounded by sheafs of stamped paper, on which he and his two aides scribbled assiduously in the thick fog of the strong tobacco he smoked. His skin was yellow and his drooping mustache and gnarled fingers were still more yellow from tobacco stain. In spite of all this, his head was a formidable arsenal of defense within its fortress of stamped paper.

Stamped paper comes in long wide sheets, sometimes bordered from corner to corner with a red line, and bears in the upper left-hand corner the seal of the Peruvian Republic. A beautiful shield of symbolic nobility, never more vilified than here.

There are sheafs, piles, mountains of this stamped paper all over Peru, in the form of affidavits, proceedings and briefs. In the offices of lawyers and would-be lawyers, in the notaries' offices, in the courts, in the government offices, at the military courts, in the tax bureaus, in the hut of the pauper and the palace of the millionaire. "Draw up your petition on stamped paper," the order always went. From Lima to the most remote corner of the country spread the smothering snow of stamped paper. There might be no bread, but there was always stamped paper. It was the national ill. In law codes, and on stamped paper, part of the tragedy of Peru has been written. The rest is written in guns and blood. The law, the sacred domain of the law! Order, the sacred domain of order! And the country, like a soldier lost in no man's land, was caught between two fires and always vanquished.

Iniguez, the wire-puller, fired with sly delight from his paper fortress. Don Alvaro was a man who chose wisely. To all the above must be added the circumstance that the pettifogger was the son of a humble landowner who had been robbed of his farm by the Cordovas. When his father was plunged into poverty, he had to give up his studies at the university and return to his province. Therefore Iniguez put special zeal into his defense of the enemy of his enemies. He knew

perfectly well that, even if Amenabar won, he would not restore his property to him. But he would derive satisfaction for his own misfortunes from that of his despoilers. Don Alvaro suspected this, and he lost little time in laying the matter before him. He arrived late in the afternoon and he and the lawyer went into one of the interior rooms of the dusty, silent house.

"Listen, Iniguez," he said in the tone of a man accustomed to being obeyed, as they sat down facing one another, "our first problem is to get Bismarck Ruiz out of the way. I can't tell you how exasperated I am at his insolence. But you know the Cordovas look out for him, and, even if they didn't, they would make a hullaballoo about it in the papers of the capital of the province. What would you advise me to do?"

"Ha, ha," laughed the lawyer. With his scrawny body sunk between his long legs and his skinny arms he really did look as though he belonged to the spider family. "Maybe Bismarck would find it a good thing to play the fool. You know what he is: a woman chaser, a pleasure hound . . . We might be able to . . . you understand—"

"Yes, we might be able to. But Ruiz has got it in for me. And you know why? He blames me because he hasn't got ahead. When he began to make a name for himself as a lawyer he wanted to get to the top. He has always been a second-stringer with a lot of ambition. He and my son Oscar—you know what a rattle-brain he is—became friends because they both have a weakness for the bottle. And Ruiz thought this would be a big help to him. But not on your life. I never once invited him to any of our parties nor let him set foot on my place, and the people of my class all did the same. He has hated me ever since then and I just laughed at him. But there's no such thing as a little enemy, now I see it, and here—"

"Ha-ha! You know that he has completely lost his head over that brazen Melba Cortez. She's a friend of the Pimentel girls. So is your son Oscar."

Don Alvaro slapped himself on the brow with the palm of his hand.

"You are absolutely right, my friend. That's the right road. It so happens that Oscar, who hangs around town most of the time, is here. And about the other matter, what are we going to do?"

"Don Alvaro, sir, I have told you that I think we ought to take over the whole community. What good are those ignorant Indians? We can do

it legally. There is a basis for the claim."

"No, I have already said no. We have to make it look as though we were just revindicating our rights, not despoiling the Indians. I think, the same as you, that these ignorant Indians are no good to the country, and that they should be handed over to men of enterprise, the men who make their countries great. But Zenobio Garcia has told me that the part of Rumi I am claiming is the best part. Further up there's nothing but rocks. We are handling this well. They will work for me if I leave them on their land, which is arable land. But I need them in a silver mine I'm working on the other side of the Ocos River. When I get Rumi it will bring me right up to the boundary of the ranch where the mine is. There are plenty of hands to work on it. Either they sell the ranch to me or I'll sue them. If I were to do what you want me to, we'd probably have a scandal on our hands. You know I plan to run for senator and we have to avoid any possibility of a scandal.

"In the capital of the department there's a bunch of those parrots that are always defending the Indians and attacking respectable people like us. They publish a sheet called La Verdad. Now they will attack me, but I'll be within the law and I can defend myself. If I were to take over the whole community, even if I did have the law on my side, people would think it was robbery. I have to be careful of appearances because of my candidacy. With the community and this neighboring ranch and the silver mine, I'll be the biggest man in the province and one of the biggest in the department. I'll be senator. And then, my friend, it will be the Cordovas' turn. I never forget. It's a sacred debt I owe my father's memory. Besides, Peru needs men of enterprise who will make people work. What's the good of all this cheap humanitarianism? It's work and more work, and so that there will be work there must be men who will make the masses work."

"Certainly. And your determination seems all the more praiseworthy, considering that you are just one and there are four of the Cordovas."

Don Alvaro, who had grown excited talking about his plans, sank into a gloomy depression as he spoke of his family.

"Yes, I have had no luck. There's my brother Ramiro. From the time he first went to school he was a highbrow, and he has wound up as a woman's doctor. Did you ever hear of such degeneration? And Elias is still worse. Doctor of Literature and Professor of History. Have you ever heard of anything so effeminate? If they wanted to have professions they could have been first-class lawyers, members of the

Supreme Court. And my sister Luisa? In Paris. In her last letter to some of her friends she says she's going to marry an Italian prince. I send her three thousand soles a month and she is always complaining about how poor she is. I hope she doesn't get married, for this prince is probably a sponger and they'll want more money. I have my own family pride, but I make a distinction between the man who uses his titles because he's proud of them, and the one who lives off them.

"I have been more fortunate with my children. Aside from Oscar, who is too big to do anything about, Fernando likes the country and my daughters are quiet and I'll marry them off well. And no studying! Five years of primary school, and then the girls get married and the boys go to work. My father made a mistake giving my brothers too much education. We need practical men. I am going to have Pepito, the youngest of the boys, study. He wants to be a lawyer, and there's a lot of room in that profession, a lot of room. . . ."

"A great deal of room," Iniguez agreed gravely.

"Well, Iniguez, I've let my tongue run away with me because of the confidence and trust I have in you. Besides I believe in the saying: Tell your doctor and your lawyer everything. Anyway, you know I've got backbone, and I don't care if there are four or twenty Cordovas. I'm relying on you."

Don Alvaro clenched his fists and assumed again his determined air.

"I am highly honored, Don Alvaro. Now, allow me to inform you that I am going to need witnesses. We have said that the lands of Umay extend as far as the so-called ravine of Rumi. Now, to explain how the Indians come to be there, we will say that they are unfairly usurping your lands because of a deliberate misinterpretation. That what is really Lombriz Creek is called Rumi Gorge, and as a result of this the community has extended its lands. We'll call in several people from these parts as witnesses. Besides, we'll say that what is now called Lombriz Creek was formerly Culebra Creek and that the real gorge of Rumi is where that little stream that dries up in summer runs between the cliffs that face Muncha. We will ask for the lands as far as what is now called the Rumi Gorge which was, and is, described on the deeds as Lombriz Creek."

"That's an excellent idea."

"Besides, we'll have to have the boundary stones that go from Lombriz Creek to El Alto taken away, and say that the community lands are

those that lie around Lake Yananahui. That will be the finishing touch. I've worked up the brief very carefully and that's why it has taken me a while. Now I want the witnesses."

Don Alvaro's big eyes glittered.

"I'll send you Zenobio Garcia and his people, and the Magician, a peddler who has been very useful to me. He has traced over twenty runaway hands for me. To be sure, I have paid him ten soles for each one, but he has been useful and we can count on him. Garcia has been on my side for a long time. Both are already working on the Rumi business. Don't think I've been asleep. I have already arranged the matter of taking possession with the subprefect as soon as the judge—"

"How about the judge?"

"On my side. He owes his job to me. I used my influence and got him appointed even though he was only second on the list of candidates."

Don Alvaro rubbed his hands together and the lawyer asked permission to light up a cigarette. It was generously granted, and he added:

"That's why I told you we ought to win Bismarck Ruiz over. I have put a spy on him, a clerk, with a good handwriting, a young fellow who offered him his services very cheap. I make up the difference—you understand. Don't think the Indians aren't going to smell a rat. The other day one of them came in to tell Ruiz that they suspected you were hand in glove with Zenobio Garcia and the Magician. Ruiz told them not to worry, because he would discredit their testimony by bringing up unsettled charges against them. You see? Besides, he could appeal the judge's verdict. The Indians know nothing about this. All he has to do is keep quiet."

"Those wily Indians! Leave the matter to me, I'll take care of it. And as soon as possible I'll send you Garcia and the Magician and some others, so you can rehearse them in what they are to say."

"That will be fine, Don Alvaro, sir."

"And what about you? How much do you want for your services?" asked Amenabar pulling out his wallet.

"Whatever seems right to you, sir . . . You know I have the expense of that spy for Ruiz, too."

Don Alvaro counted out a thousand soles in broad blue bills which Iniguez received with a polite smile. They walked to the door talking over the final details. The bodyguards were waiting outside and the rancher mounted and set out for the house he owned in town.

The night was falling slowly, and two Indians were hanging up on the street corners lanterns of tin and glass, patched here and there with strips of paper, which held a reddish candle. A drunkard was weaving down the middle of the street waving his arms and his poncho and cheering for Pierola. He was that vagabond singer and poet known as El Loco Pierola. Don Alvaro almost rode him down, and he went on his way without paying any attention to the insults El Loco hurled after him by way of protest. But one of the two bodyguards, to show his devotion to duty, gave him a good crack with his reins as he rode by. The poet would get his revenge through mortifying verses.

The oldest of the two-storied houses that surrounded the square opened its gates slowly. The bustling of servants could be heard in the halls and the courtyard. Don Alvaro rode in, answering submissive greetings.

In Rumi the animals stayed on with the people, except the asses, which took advantage of their freedom to run away to their favorite haunts in the hot valleys of the Oeros River. Four glossy, agile young donkeys, erect of head and bright of eye—for they had not yet learned the weight of loads—were shut up in a barnyard to learn it. In others, ten Indians stooped over the sheep making the heavy steel scissors click, and the village reeked with the acrid odor of shorn wool. In another, Clemente Oteiza and his men were branding. In the center of the pen burned a hot fire where the branding iron was heated, and nearby they threw the animals with ropes or with their arms. Oteiza was a master at this. Taking the animal by the horns and the jaw—sometimes it was a strong, full-grown bull—he twisted its neck until it fell over on its side. It was an exciting duel. The muscles of man and animal stood out in knots, and the veins swelled up, tattooing the tense skin. Once the animal was thrown, there was a hiss of the branding iron and the letters C R were left on its flank. These were not the initials of a man but the initials of a village: the Community of Rumi.

In another field, Abram Maqui, his son Augusto, and other wranglers were breaking the new horses. After bucking and balking for several

days, the colts were beginning to trot. Rosendo went from one barn lot to the other, giving a word of advice here, of approval there, managing everything. Those who were not qualified for these special jobs finished gathering the beans in the little garden patches behind their houses. Then they threshed them out with a stick.

The stubble fields were dotted with the work and the breeding animals. Some of the mares and the cows looked on with startled eyes at the unusual operations of branding and breaking. The animals, which had been wild at first, gradually quieted down and began to live on terms of comradeship with the people. The sun lasted all day, and the feeling of satisfaction, day and night.

Laurita Pimentel, after an exciting night of dancing, came over to the bed where Melba Cortez was enjoying the idleness to which she had become accustomed:

"Shall I tell you, shall I tell you?" she cried, feigning great enthusiasm.

Melba sat up, revealing her full breast.

"What, what is it?"

"Marvelous, darling, simply marvelous."

"Let's hear it."

"The most wonderful opportunity, my dear."

"But tell me, what it is?"

"And everything, everything depends on you."

"Come on and tell me, you've got me on pins and needles."

Augusto Maqui, full of triumphant self-assurance, rode one of the recently broken ponies up to the highlands. He went along the same road, or, to be more exact, path, across which that ill-omened snake had run one day. He did not want to ride the pony too far, but it did not show any sign of fatigue. When they got to where the wind began

to whistle through the grass and howl through the rocks, Augusto, looking up, noticed that there had been a change. Was something missing or had something been added? Something was missing. The boundary stone piles that went from the source of Lombriz Creek to El Alto were not there. He looked carefully, and looked again. They certainly were gone. He pulled his horse around and trotted home as fast as he dared ride the new pony.

"Taita Rosendo, taita, they have knocked down the boundary stones, they're not there. . . ."

The mayor rose determinedly to his feet.

"Villagers . . . villagers, we must go and set up the boundary marks . . . just the way they were . . . Come on . . . come on!"

"Let's go," answered the villagers, with one voice.

Hours later a hundred busy men were gathering up the scattered stones and building up the cone-shaped piles once more, from Lombriz Creek to El Alto. They were unaware of the subtleties of the law and trustingly believed that they had removed all threat of danger. Each pile was the same size as before and in the same place.

Mardoqueo was an Indian as simple as his work, which consisted in weaving mats and fans of rushes that he cut in certain places on the shores of Lake Yananahui. These mats, depending on their size, were used either on the floors of the rich people's houses, or for the first layer of the beds of the poor. Over them sheepskins and blankets were laid. The fans were used to bring the hearth-fire embers to a flame. At this time he was weaving a very large rug for the floor of the school. Kneeling in front of a huge pile of pliable rushes he carried on his work with ease and exactitude, plaiting the fronds in and out, and the light rug grew before him, bearing greenish yellow memories of the lake. Rosendo came over to him:

"Have you got small mats and fans?"

"Not many."

"All right, load them on a donkey. You're going over to Umay. You go to the houses of the Indians first, and then to the ranch. You ask the Indians, in an offhand way, if the Magician and Zenobio Garcia ever

come over that way. When you get to the ranch ask for the lady of the house, Doña Leonor, and after a while you go into the kitchen and the servants will talk to you if they know you are from Rumi, and they'll tell you what is afoot."

Mardoqueo stood there thoughtfully. Really, this was not the kind of a job for him. What did he know about anything, except weaving his mats, selling them, and tilling the land? His face, seamed and burned by the wind of the heights of Yanañahui, assumed a wary expression. Rosendo went on:

"The selectmen all agree that you are to go. We all have to do everything we can to help save our community. . . ."

What could Mardoqueo answer, even though all he knew was how to weave his mats, sell them, and till the soil, when it was a question of the community?

"All right," he answered.

Melba Cortez turned Bismarck Ruiz's head with honeyed words and low-necked dresses. She told him how greatly she missed him, how much she admired his abilities and his strength. She gave herself to him in ecstasies of passion. From time to time she would complain that they were not as happy as they should be. And the coarse, clumsy Bismarck, slavering over the trembling, pink flower, swore that he would do whatever she wanted. That he loved her better than anything in the world.

The lad came in to see Don Alvaro, trembling with fear and doubts. When he walked into the office he felt as though he were entering a puma's den. The boss had sent for him, saying to the messenger: "Tell that rascal I want to see him immediately." Ramon Briceno did not know exactly what it was about, but he had a pretty good idea.

Don Alvaro was sitting before a broad table, his arms folded across his breast. On the table was an inkwell, a quartz paperweight that held down no papers, and a candle in a holder made of a condor's leg. The claw clutched a rock made of clay.

"Now, see here," began Don Alvaro sternly, "I want you to explain the meaning of this song to me."

And he began to hum a popular, comic huaino that said, among other things:

Oh, star, little star,
I see you very much changed—
With your head bound up
And your belly swollen up!

Ramon did not understand this humorous approach and he did not know whether to laugh or run away. Don Alvaro, after he had hummed the tune, looked just as stern as before, watching him with his piercing eyes.

"Speak up now, I want you to explain it to me," he repeated.

Ramon wiped the sweat from his glistening brown face with a corner of his poncho.

"So you're ashamed! Go on, explain it," he went on severely.

Ramon began to stammer something and Don Alvaro listened in secret amusement at his confusion. This was one of the results of his power, his reputation. He felt very happy that day. When Ramon stopped talking, without having said anything, Don Alvaro began to laugh, saying:

"You scoundrelly half-breed . . . So you've got Clotilde in the family way . . . ha-ha! All right, nobody's going to whip you for that. She is Doña Leonor's favorite servant, so I'm going to hire you to work for me. You Bricenos have always been dependable people, and I never saw a better shot than your father."

Ramon watched him, unable to do anything but nod his head in agreement. He still could not get over his surprise. Nothing had happened to him and Don Alvaro was laughing heartily.

"Those cows of mine over Rumi way are neglected. I need someone to look after them and if you do it well I'll make you foreman of a group of herders. Now I'm going to give you a rifle."

Ramon's dull eyes gleamed.

"Yes, a fine rifle. And I'll show you how to use it. There won't be

another half-breed to equal you when you have your Winchester."

It was Don Alvaro's way of spurring on his ranch hands, and it kept alive a spirit of rivalry among them, some thinking themselves better than others.

He brought a yellow-stocked Winchester out of his room and told Ramon to come with him. They came out of the big arched house and walked through the fields to a knoll. In the distance a little flock of sheep was grazing. Ramon was afraid he would not give a good account of himself and the rancher might go back on his offer of a gun. His father had a gun, and it was not hard to aim. Once he had let him use it and he had shot a deer; although, the truth of the matter was he had only broken its leg and the dogs had finished it off. But now . . . A rifle might kick harder, might even fly out of his hands. It seemed very complicated, almost mysterious.

Don Alvaro, with leisurely movements and words, showed him how to load the sixteen shots into the breech. Then he demonstrated how the bolt worked, and the bright bullets came hopping out into the air as lively as grasshoppers. The half-breed was entranced. The rancher, with the air of a teacher, said to him:

"Now let's see you do it."

Ramon was torn between delight and fear as he grasped the gun. It was not very light; it weighed just about what he had thought it should, to have the right power. He took the bullets, too, cold, shining, with their red caps, their gold-colored shells, their heavy, smooth, lead noses. One by one he slipped them into the magazine valve. Everything worked perfectly. Ramon trembled with apprehension and delight. Don Alvaro picked up the gun again.

"Now you take aim. Like this: you look through this groove to the sight on the end and when those two are in line with the middle of your target, you pull the trigger. I would shoot a sheep to show you, but it would be a shame to kill them, so I'll shoot into the air."

The shot rang out and the bullet probably hit some distant hillside. A girl was guarding the sheep which were spread out on the slope nearby and at the sound of the shot she quickly began to herd them together.

"Sheep, sheep!" she pleaded with the sheep instead of urging them on.

The rancher was exasperated at the way she was doing it, and he

shouted at her in his loud voice: "Keep quiet, you stupid girl."

The little shepherdess stood there motionless, perplexed. He shouted once more: "Get behind a rock or I'll kill you!"

The red skirt disappeared, rolling and dropping behind a knoll. Don Alvaro, first ejecting the shell, handed the rifle over to his pupil. The sheep had settled down and were grazing with their usual placidity.

"Get that one, that one to the left," ordered the rancher, "that one with the black spots . . . That will teach her not to be a scrub."

Ramon raised the gun to his face. It was short and easy to hold. The barrel gleamed in the sun and the sight glowed like a spark. Finally it settled down in the groove of the slide-sight like a silver fly. There was the sheep with the black spots nibbling away. Everything was quiet and ready. Perhaps the heart even stopped beating for a moment not to unsteady the hand with its powerful pulsations.

The report sounded and the sheep fell. The marksman jerked out the empty cap. The carbine had worked easily, without the jerk and kick of the shotgun.

"Have you ever shot before?" asked Don Alvaro.

"No," lied Ramon.

"Well, well . . . Then you're going to be a good shot."

As they strolled back to the house, Don Alvaro explained to the new herder the duties of which he and his Winchester were to take charge. He also told him he would let him know when he was to begin work. In the meantime he could live at the ranch with Clotilde.

The little Indian shepherd girl waited a long time behind the hill. The silence finally brought her out of her hiding place. She dropped down beside the dead sheep. Weeping and sobbing she kept saying over and over:

"Oh, my little spotted sheep, my little spotted sheep."

The only consolation she found was her tears.

Mardoqueo, after riding about the neighborhood, getting what information he could from the tenant farmers, came up to the ranch house just at this time, driving before him his donkey loaded with mats.

Doña Leonor, the wife of Don Alvaro, said as she saw him come in:

"Oh, so you've come, Mardoqueo. I was just thinking about you because I need some mats for the servants."

"Very good, mistress."

"You're probably hungry. Go to the kitchen and tell them to give you some potato stew. Then we'll see about the mats, if you're not asking too much. Of late you've been awfully high."

"I'll let you have them cheap, mistress."

Mardoqueo, without waiting for a second invitation, went to the kitchen thinking how well everything was working out. Doña Leonor really had the best of intentions. She liked to be kind to poor Mardoqueo, such a good, simple soul. Don Alvaro, followed by his new herder, came into the house at that very moment and saw the donkey loaded with mats standing in the courtyard.

"Whose donkey is that?"

"It's Mardoqueo's, that community Indian who sells mats."

Don Alvaro ripped out a string of oaths and called for the servants and herders.

"And you, too, Ramon, let's see what you can do. Bring out that Indian, tie him to the eucalyptus tree, and give him a hundred lashes as a spy."

Doña Leonor and her daughters fled to their rooms. All through the rectangle of houses fear ran like the wind. Mardoqueo was dragged to the eucalyptus tree.

"What have I done? I haven't done anything," he pleaded.

There he was stripped and tied by his wrists to the old tree trunk. Ramon, wishing to give his benefactor, who was watching from the door of his office, proof of his gratitude, picked up the whip. And the long leather lash whistled through the air and came down with a

crack. Mardoqueo's howling outcry rent the air. The whip kept falling and the cries grew fainter until, finally, in the midst of a silence that seemed to turn everything into stone, the thud of the savage, implacable blows went on. When Mardoqueo was untied he rolled heavily to the ground, like a corpse. Black blood was oozing from his swollen back.

Iniguez answered Bismarck Ruiz's pleading in the form that was to be expected from his conversation with Don Alvaro Amenabar. As the deeds of the community did not state the boundaries in terms of latitude and longitude, he attributed this omission—which was the result of the ignorance or the knavery of the property registrars—to a premeditated plan on the part of the Indians. As proof of this, he cited the fact that they had deliberately changed the names of places so as to occupy lands which were not theirs. He used many legal phrases, cited precedents, and listed as witnesses Don Julio Contreras, Don Zenobio Garcia, and as many residents of Muncha or persons acquainted with the region as the judge wished to call. The judge cited the witnesses in due legal form and many appeared to testify.

Behind a high desk in the judge's chambers, which smelled of ink and musty paper, appeared the smoothly combed, mustached head of the judge, who spoke juridically. Beside him sat a short-sighted clerk, taking down the testimony mechanically. The witnesses gave their evidence, thinking carefully at times, at times speaking freely, but without entirely letting themselves go.

Don Julio Contreras Carvajal, peddler, without fixed domicile, because of his profession, unmarried, fifty years of age, etc., testified that he had been visiting Rumi periodically for twenty years. That he did not know exactly the names of the gorges and brooks, for his heavy duties hardly allowed him time to familiarize himself with the towns and regions through which he traveled; but that on one occasion, when he was stopping in the house of the villager, Miguel Panta, the latter told him that the names of certain gorges and brooks of the region had been changed by the villagers and nobody had ventured to do anything about it. When he was asked why Panta told him this, he answered that it was in a burst of pride, to show the power of the community. The judge, solemn and austere, questioned him repeatedly on this point, and the Magician left the stand convinced that Iniguez and Don Alvaro were dealing with a man who was not going to deliver any snap judgment.

Don Zenobio Garcia Moraleda, businessman (he distilled and sold brandy), resident of Muncha and a prominent person in the district, where he held the post of governor, married, etc., testified that he had known the community of Rumi since he was a child. That it was public knowledge in Muncha and the vicinity that the community took over land that did not belong to it by changing the names of landmarks and illegally extending its boundaries. That formerly the village lay on the highlands of Yanañahui, where the ruins of stone houses still existed. He was questioned again and again by the stern judge, among other things, as to whether he had ever had trouble with the villagers of Rumi. He said he had not, because he had taken good care to avoid it, for the community had become a hide-out for Fiero Vasquez and his gang, and this was a menace to Muncha and all the ranchers in the region. When Garcia left the court room his face was redder than usual and his forehead was perspiring from the strain he had undergone. He, too, thought that the judge was not a man to be trifled with.

Don Agapito Carranza Chamis, businessman, prominent citizen, etc. He confirmed everything Zenobio Garcia had testified. When asked by the upright judge if he had any proofs to advance, he said it seemed proof to him that, although the residents of Muncha were almost all poor the community charged them one sol a year for every animal that grazed their lands, whereas Don Alvaro, who was rich, did not pay anything. The judge cross-questioned him minutely, and Agapito left the room thinking not only that the judge was incorruptible, but that he had been a fool to let himself be dragged into this by Zenobio. Never again would he consult him when he was called upon for anything, and, still less, believe in his promises. What if he would save a sol a year on each head of stock? Suppose now he was brought up on charges of perjury.

For fifteen days the judge examined and cross-questioned fifteen witnesses. And in the sluggish, involved, spongy style that characterizes legal procedure the clerk filled sheet after sheet of stamped paper. There was an imposing mass of it when the villagers came in with Rosendo Maqui to find out from Bismarck Ruiz how things were going. The lawyer told Rosendo to be ready to testify the next week. There was nothing to worry about. He would have Contreras, Garcia, and the other witnesses disqualified. The rest were unimportant.

Like Fiero Vasquez, Nasha Suro wore black clothes. In Fiero, by his outlaw standards, they symbolized renunciation; in Nasha, they were like a lugubrious cloak of mystery. Her shawl covered her head, hiding her gray, snarled hair. The only contrasting note was her brown, wrinkled face, so wrinkled and filthy that it looked like a dirty rag. Her dull eyes occasionally glittered strangely. She had the reputation of being a wisewoman. And also, an accomplished witch. She was little and bent, and lived alone in a small house that had a narrow door and no windows. This was her lair, where she carried out her strange rites. Nobody ever went in there unless he was seriously ill. She performed most of her cures in the patient's own house. She had the villagers collect herbs for her, but certain ones she went to look for herself among the fields and beside the brooks. Only her expert eye could distinguish them.

Nasha, or to give her her right name, Narcisa, was the daughter of the healer Abel Suro, and the sister of Casimiro who died young. Of the three, Abel was the one who seemed the most likely to pass into history. First Casimiro and then Nasha flourished in the shadow of his fame. He made some wonderful cures, and Don Gonzalo Amenabar himself was the beneficiary of one of them.

Don Gonzalo was so enterprising that he once started looking for mines in the rocky cliffs along the road to Muncha. When he went to dynamite one of the rocks, either because he was too near or not well enough sheltered, he was hit by a flying stone that fractured his skull. He could not ride his horse and his men picked him up to carry him to Umay or to town. But they quickly realized that both places were too far away.

Besides, at that time there was no doctor in the town and Umay was the same as any other place. Don Gonzalo could hardly articulate his words and was unable to move one side of his body. They stopped at Rumi and called Abel Suro. He examined the wound. Splinters of broken bone were sunken into and depressing the mass of the brain. Abel told them he would have to perform a trepanation. One of the men told him he thought that was a job for a surgeon, not a healer. Don Gonzalo, who was beside himself with pain and the fear of being paralyzed, thickly told him to go ahead and operate.

It was in the morning and Abel, calm and methodical, said there was no great hurry. He began by giving the patient different potions brewed from herbs to dull the pain. The sick man was growing quieter and after each dose of herb tea, Abel inquired:"Does it hurt you, sir?"

"Not so much," muttered Don Gonzalo.

Abel put up water to boil in a new pot, and set several others, new ones, too, around the fire. Then he gave Don Gonzalo a cup of all the different brews that he had been giving him separately mixed together. When the water had come to a boil he poured it into the little pots which held herbs, too, and put several thin sharp knives and awls of steel into them. Then he plunged his hands into the water, because, to use his own words, for an operation of this sort to be successful, it had to be done "hot." Next he muttered several secret spells and began the operation. His helpers kept changing the water in the little pots to have it hot all the time and Abel kept dipping his hands into them and using first one knife and then another, one awl and then another, taking care to see that they did not cool off. He cut away the piece of the skull that was fractured, leaving an oval opening which he covered with a thin slice of squash skin that he had prepared beforehand. He put a poultice of herbs over the wound, and in a few days Don Gonzalo was able to return to his ranch. There he recovered completely, and he lived for many years with his skull patched up with a piece of squash skin. He finally died of pneumonia which he caught in a storm.

The healer showed himself to be a man of noble spirit. After the rancher had recovered he wanted to give him a team of oxen—and the community was badly in need of them at the time—and, besides, he told him to ask for whatever he liked in money or goods. Abel answered:

“Sir, I am an Indian, and all I ask is for you not to forget the Indians. Their lives hurt them as badly as a broken head. . . .”

Don Gonzalo argued:

“You people are all right.”

“Not all the Indians live in communities.”

Don Gonzalo said:

“Well, son, I’ll do what I can for the Indians.”

Abel bequeathed his knowledge to Casimiro, but, like the soothsayer he was, he could foresee his son’s early death, and so he taught it to Nasha too. Years later several dignitaries came inquiring about the healers in the community and Nasha was the only one they found. She told them she had never performed a trepanation, and could not if she

had to, for she lacked the strength and the experience. One of the gentlemen complained:

“You see what is happening. In the time of the Incas they used war clubs studded with metal knobs which broke the parietal walls, and their surgeons had plenty of cases to work with. Now such opportunities are rare, and the operation is disappearing.”

The gentlemen tried to question Nasha about the herbs she used, but she pretended not to be very bright and told them only the names of those everybody knew.

Even though she did not have the opportunity to perform trepanations, Nasha had many clients among the villagers and the farmers in the neighborhood. Their numbers had fallen off somewhat since the use of quinine for malaria became general and rhubarb and soda for indigestion, pills for every kind of ill, and pliers for toothache. But Nasha could not be replaced when it came to curing the spell of the evil eye cast on children by wicked persons or the fright of seeing a ghost in the gorges or wooded ravines. For the evil eye she prescribed a special bath and hung a cock’s crest around the child’s neck as a scapulary. To cure the fright she led the child to the place where he thought he had seen the ghost, and after making such faces that the child burst out crying she pronounced some strange words and ran home with him. If the patient was an adult the first thing she used was a guinea pig. She rubbed the patient hard all over the body with it until the animal was dead. Then she cut open the little corpse, examined its entrails carefully, and stated that the illness of the patient was in this or that organ, depending on the signs she found in the animal. And in accordance with her discoveries she prescribed the cure.

Nasha was not a witch who wrought harm, and for this reason she was very good at undoing evil spells. But nobody knew how she worked her cures. She shut herself up in her stone lair with the patient and anesthetized him with potions and strange words. She did all this at night. Around the house the relatives of the patient or some of the villagers mounted guard, and they clanked their machetes together to frighten and drive away the hostile evil spirits who might come to interfere with the healing of the patient. When the person died in spite of everything, it was because the spell had gone too far and there was no way to get it out.

But it would have been foolhardy to laugh at Nasha, thinking she could not take the offensive. It was said that she could lame people

just by picking up a little dirt from the place where they had stepped. That by making a doll to look like her intended victim, and sticking it full of cactus thorns, the person would begin to feel the most dreadful pains, and even die of them, depending on the place where the thorns were stuck. It was said she could make people waste away till they were like a stick. It was said she could take people's eyes out, and that she could drive people crazy with a drink of chicha mixed with hairs, dirt from a grave, and certain herbs. It was said that, with the help of a little owl called the chushec, she could pull off the head of a sleeping person and take it away with her and bewitch it; or simply put half a squash on the neck so that the head, which went hopping about in the meantime, trying to find the place where it belonged, could not grow on again; or she could turn the body around so the head would grow on backward. It was said. . . .

To go wherever she wanted to she could turn herself into any kind of a black animal, from a chicken to a cow. The belief is that these metamorphosed animals can be wounded but not killed. The witch or wizard, who is wounded while in the shape of an animal, will bear the wound afterward on his leg or arm. Once Nasha had her arm tied up. It was surely because of something like that. Nasha could inquire about the future from the coca and could also read it in the flight of condors, eagles, and hawks, and in the color of the setting sun.

In these days the thoughts of many of the villagers, aside from the skeptics, were fixed on Nasha as much as on Rosendo. Why didn't she, who knew so many things, do something to help the community? Was Don Alvaro invulnerable? There were some who began to suspect—though they kept it to themselves, so as not to arouse Nasha's ire—that she didn't know as much as people said and that perhaps all the stories about her power were just talk.

But there came a day when Nasha herself spoke out. It was when poor Mardoqueo came back from Umay with his back all swollen, looking as somber and gloomy as a January sky. Nasha put a poultice of herbs on his back, and then, clenching her gnarled hands, she cursed Don Alvaro Amenabar and predicted a bad end for him. Then those who believed in her had a feeling of relief at the thought that something decisive was at hand. One morning the door of her house stayed shut. She had risen very early.

She walked along the highlands at her usual slow gait, keeping off the

beaten tracks, all day. At twilight she reached the plains of Umay. She waited until night fell and, when there were no lights to be seen and all was darkness and silence, she crept toward the ranch house and went into it without disturbing either the silence or the darkness. Even the four savage mastiffs that were unchained at night to watch the house did not hear her. She advanced noiselessly, like a ghost, till she came to the parlor, and pushed open one of the doors. In a niche a little votive lamp burned before a statue of the Virgin. By the light of the lamp she made out what she was looking for: a picture of Don Alvaro Amenabar. It was standing on a table in a frame of embossed silver. She took it out, leaving the frame in its place, but with an ominous cactus thorn stuck through the wooden back. Then, hiding the picture under her shawl, she slipped out just as quietly and was soon far away. The house slept on in the darkness and the silence.

The next morning the empty frame was discovered, and Doña Leonor began to weep and so did her daughters.

"Alvaro, they are going to bewitch you. Everybody knows Nasha Suro is a witch."

"I'm not afraid of witchcraft. You look after my food and there's nothing to worry about. That's the only kind of witchcraft I believe in."

Doña Leonor and her daughters, in spite of their upbringing and their race, did believe in it, for they shared all the local superstitions. Over the doorway of each one's room hung a special kind of everlasting cactus with its roots toward the ceiling. Among their clothes or trunks, if one looked carefully, one would be sure to find a dried skunk's paw. Both cactus and skunk's paw were supposed to be excellent to ward off witchcraft.

Some days later Don Alvaro went to town accompanied by his bodyguard when suddenly, in the middle of the plateau, the black figure of Nasha Suro appeared at a bend in the road. The horse shied at the unexpected apparition, and when Don Alvaro finally got it quieted down he looked at her and said:

"You're trying to frighten me, you stupid old hag. Be thankful that your father once saved my father's life or I would put a bullet through you this very minute."

The bent-over figure looked like a bundle of rags. Only her eyes, wide open in her dirt-colored face, looked haughty and malignant.

"Search her," the rancher ordered his guards.

They were afraid of her. They dismounted slowly and unwillingly.

"Search her, you cowards!"

While they did this Don Alvaro raged on:

"If they find that picture on you, you're going to pay for your impudence, all right. . . ."

The rough hands of the guards went over the flabby body with fear and repugnance. They found nothing. Nasha Suro started to walk off keeping her sinister gaze fixed on the rancher and his men.

They, too, went on and the master said:

"Witches work with poison herbs or by suggestion. It's silly to be afraid of them. That's just what they want."

The bodyguards did not say yes or no. They consoled themselves with the thought that Nasha Suro must know that it was not their fault that they had laid hands on her and she would not do anything to them.

Doña Leonor sent an emissary to Rumi offering money to anyone who would hand over Don Alvaro's picture. The villagers pretended not to know what he was talking about, but afterward they gave themselves over to speculations. So that was where Nasha had disappeared to. She had probably stuck it full of thorns by now, and if that was harmful in the image of a person, if it was the picture itself, there was no salvation. Undoubtedly she would make his eyes burst by frying huailulos in unsalted butter. Huailulos or huairuros are a very hard, pretty fruit, red with a black spot. They grow in the woods, and peddlers—like that damned Magician—generally sell them. Anybody can have them, because they bring good luck, but witches use them to make people go blind, and for other purposes. The butter must be unsalted; for salt is an antidote against any kind of spell, even those that come from the hills or lakes. Not a villager ever goes out to the fields without having eaten something with salt or putting a few grains on his tongue.

Comments ran rife. Nasha Suro, with her knowledge and magic words, would know how to cast a spell and free the community from this devil, the son of another, who never knew the meaning of gratitude. What had Don Gonzalo Amenabar done for the Indians? What was Don Alvaro doing? Exploiting them, killing them, beating them,

robbing them. It was only fair that as Abel had healed, Nasha should wreak harm. Everything is paid for in life, and evil, sooner or later, receives its punishment. These were the comments of those who had put their hopes in Nasha. Porfirio Medrano did not say he did not believe in such witchcraft. Rosendo Maqui believed and didn't believe. Was it possible that the secret powers of God, the saints, and the earth could be bent to man's will, and, as in this case, by a queer feeble old woman? Besides, the coca had answered Nasha adversely. Unless Don Alvaro was one thing, and immutable destiny, another. Rosendo really would have liked to believe. Goyo Auca waited for the mayor to say something to guide him, but Rosendo kept his doubts to himself, not to dishearten the believers. The other selectmen held out some hope to their questioners. Doroteo Quispe, a tacit rival of Nasha's because of the somewhat magical quality of his prayers, scoffed, saying that the only salvation lay in God, not in witches.

Time went on and people began to say that nothing was happening to Don Alvaro. He came and went from Umay to the town, riding hard, as sound and healthy as ever. Nothing seemed to be interfering with his activities. Everybody knew that Zenobio Garcia's testimony and that of the others had been prompted by the rancher. Was Nasha's vaunted power any good?

One afternoon she came out of her house and everybody recognized in the blank expression on her face and in her lackluster gaze fixed on the ground the painful signs of discouragement and defeat. All she said was these words to Rosendo:

"I can't get hold of his soul."

"We'll go to the seashore, my love. Just for a little while, to have a good time. I don't want you to give up your work for good. You know, I can't live there all the time, either. But just for a couple of months. We'll be so happy. Far from this gossiping town," Melba kept pleading.

The twilight filtered into the room through a blue curtain. Melba was very beautiful. The whiteness of her seemed to catch all the light in the semidarkness.

"That's five thousand soles that Oscar will give Laura, secretly. You know that they are on intimate terms. All they ask of you is not to do anything. Just not to interfere. Not to disqualify the witnesses."

Melba kissed the lawyer passionately—thinking of the five thousand soles which she, too, was to receive—without minding the sticky sweat that covered his moonlike, flushed face. Bismarck Ruiz saw the opportunity of avenging himself on Amenabar for his slights slipping through his fingers. But it would be pleasant to go away for a while, far away, with this woman who really seemed to be in love with him.

"We'll go for the summer. The beaches are very pretty then. We will be so happy, my love. Didn't you say you loved me better than anything in the world?"

Bismarck Ruiz gave in once more.

Rosendo Maqui spoke with fervid simplicity as he testified about the rights of the community of Rumi, its deeds, its undisputed possession of the lands all through the years, of tradition itself which affirmed that these lands had always belonged to the community and to nobody else. His voice choked with emotion and he had to pause a moment to regain his composure. When he had finished, the judge began to question him carefully and in detail about the points that had been brought out by Iniguez's witnesses.

A frown of indignation and contempt darkened Maqui's brown, wrinkled face and his stern eyes reddened. He said these statements were lies, whose only purpose was to rob the community of its lands. There were the deeds and he would bring in witnesses who would tell the truth. Lombriz Creek and Rumi Gorge had always, always been called by those names. They had never changed the names. It was true that Fiero Vasquez came to the community, just as he went to many other places, but nobody ever did anything to him for fear of the vengeance of his band. The governor, Zenobio Garcia himself, saw him in Rumi and could have taken him prisoner; but he did nothing about it, in spite of the fact that he and the two men with him were carrying rifles. As far as Amenabar not paying grazing rights for his stock, this could not be taken as proof of any sort. It was simply that Don Alvaro took advantage of a situation which did not hold good for his own lands. The community had no way of making Don Alvaro pay and that was why each year all they could do was just hand his stock over to him.

At this point the judge felt called upon to enter an indignant protest:

"What do you mean by saying you had no power to make him pay? What about justice, law . . . ?"

Rosendo did not answer. He was very tired and he did not know how to bring the matter to a close. He suddenly felt lost in this world of papers, tobacco smoke, and foul air. For a moment it seemed to him as though all those pleadings and briefs piled up on the shelves and on the judge's desk were going to smother him, smother them, make an end of the community. So many papers, a countless number. So many letters, so many words, so many clauses. What did they understand of all this? Bismarck Ruiz understood, but was he one of the community? He did not love the earth; what he loved was money. The villager suffered and died under these papers like a traveler lost in the hills in a snowstorm. So he made no reply and the judge said:

"I see you do not have the proper respect for the law. It's only natural in view of your isolation from the life of the nation. Now why is that?"

The examination was very long. Rosendo was so worn out that he did not answer very fully, though at times he forgot his fatigue and talked and talked, defending their land as a wild animal defends its lair. When he had finished, the judge showed his benevolence by standing up and laying a hand on Rosendo's shoulder.

"Old fellow, personally I can excuse your shortcomings because I see you are tired. But in my capacity as judge, that is another matter: the law is the law. But don't feel badly. Bring in your witnesses. They should not be members of the community because they will say the same as you; and besides they would be prejudiced. They should be people who know Rumi."

"There are many of them, Your Honor," answered Rosendo.

Rosendo talked with Bismarck Ruiz and he gave him full instructions. With the help of the selectmen and other prominent villagers he set out to find witnesses. Rosendo decided that the judge, though he did seem severe, was probably not a bad man. It was plain that he wanted to be fair and decide in favor of whichever one was right. And that terrible impression of the choking storm of paper? The business in hand now was to see the witnesses. Let's go....

The chapel was opened and Saint Isidore was worshiped by day with

candles and by night with candles and prayers. Doroteo Quispe, on his knees, bent his broad back and bushy head before the saint while he prayed in a hoarse, supplicating voice. Behind him was a mass of shawls and ponchos from which emerged reverently bent heads. Saint Isidore was a great worker of miracles. He would save the community. He seemed more tranquil and satisfied than ever. His feast was when the grain began to form. They all promised to make it a wonderful feast, there would even be a bullfight, if he saved the community. Meanwhile they prayed fervently and the candles on the altar dripped long tears as they flickered away.

Rosendo and his helpers went to look for witnesses through the districts of Muncha and Uyumi, on the ranches located on the other side of the Ocos River, on the ranch beyond the battlements of El Alto. Everybody gave them the same answer:

"Of course you are right and everybody knows that those lands have always belonged to you people. But how can we cross Don Alvaro Amenabar? You know what he's like and there's nothing he'd stop at if we got mixed up in this."

So Rosendo, the selectmen, and the other prominent villagers returned to the village, chewing the bitter cud of disappointment, but each hoping that the other had had better luck. The terrifying power of Don Alvaro extended through the whole region like the clouds over the sky. They went to Bismarck Ruiz with the tale of their difficulties, and he said lightly, as though the matter did not really concern him:

"Just keep on looking for witnesses. There's bound to be some brave, conscientious man around here."

The brave, conscientious man appeared one day in the person of Jacinto Prieto. He was the best blacksmith in town, with a heart as big as his strong body with its mighty, sinewy arms, and brawny chest that pushed out his dark shirt. He always wore a short-peaked cap, both inside and outside his smithy, for he had no need to protect his face from the sun, fanned every day as it was by the flames of the forge. His huge hands were covered with callouses, and his shoes were charred by the hot embers. His broad, dark, rather fleshy face always had an intent expression as though he were looking for the spot on which to bring down the hammer or rub the file. The severity given his face by the frowning brow was offset by the full mouth with its

good-natured smile. He had been a friend of the community for years, and he became still more intimate with them when he accepted Evaristo Maqui as an apprentice. Every year after the harvest he would come to Rumi with four mules to buy corn and wheat.

"Here I am, Don Rosendo, after my victuals."

"Come in, come in, Don Jacinto. What a pleasure to see you!"

Prieto always stayed at Rosendo's house. The friends began to talk and, as was natural, the mayor told him about the trial and his troubles. Nobody wanted to appear as a witness for them. They could not find one single person.

"What a weak-kneed lot," remarked the blacksmith.

"Would you be willing to testify?"

"Of course, it's only telling the truth. Twenty-five or thirty years I've been coming here, ever since I was an apprentice, and this land has always belonged to the community. What is wrong about telling the truth? The ranch alongside here was still called Black Hill and they raised sheep on it. It wasn't part of Umay yet."

Rosendo was deeply grateful and wanted to make the blacksmith a present of the corn and wheat. Prieto refused.

"No, my friend. That would be like getting paid. What's right is right, and a person should tell the truth without looking for anything from it. If I took it, it would burn my conscience like a blister."

"Let's go and see Bismarck Ruiz so that you can tell him—"

"Do we have to go? All right, let's go, then, before I change my mind. The law can split the most honest truth like a piece of poorly tempered steel."

Bismarck Ruiz questioned the blacksmith about what he planned to testify, and then he said finally it was all right, that he would present a petition and the judge would cite him soon. Rosendo Maqui felt easier. Jacinto Prieto was an honest workman, a man of his word, highly thought of all through the province, both by the ranchers, whose fine horses he shod, and the poor farmers, whose shovels and picks he re-edged very cheap. He would stand by his word.

Prieto went calmly back to his shop. Like every man who is aware of

his strength Prieto had an easygoing, happy disposition. He would finish up the day's work humming a song, and then he and his helpers would sit down at the table where the blacksmith's wife would serve them their meal. Hunger always gave him an added zest. He did most of the talking, commenting on the incidents of the day's work. One of his hammers was on the point of breaking. Tools used to be better than they are now. What steel, what files! They lasted for years. It's not good to let steel cool off much before putting it in water to temper it. The person who really knows how to temper steel can tell when it's time to take it out by the hissing it makes in the water. It takes time and practice to learn that.

The Indians used to think that the water in which steel was tempered was good for a tonic. They would come to buy it. He would tell them: "You bring me as much water as you're going to take and I won't charge you for it." He did this so they wouldn't leave his bucket dry. The Indians used to be foolish like that, but they were getting brighter. But they were always victims: look what was happening to those at Rumi. He was going to testify for them because a man ought to defend the right, even if he loses. When would they call him to testify? He had once had an apprentice from Rumi who was now a blacksmith himself. The trouble with him was that he drank too much. A man can take a drink now and then, because it's bad for the body not to give it a taste of the bottle once in a while, but he should know when to stop.

The assistants, who were all apprentices, listened with the respect due a man who is the master of iron and life.

One afternoon a fellow, known as Zurdo, who had no visible means of support and was something of a vagabond and scoundrel, came into the smithy. He was wearing a yellow cotton suit, patched and dirty. His bony face and restless eyes told of an irregular existence.

"Listen, Don Jacinto, I brought in a crowbar for you to fix for me and it has broken. What kind of steel did you use on it?"

"The best kind. What kind would I use?"

"You did not. You used old melted-down iron," said Zurdo raising his voice. "You have cheated me."

The blacksmith had a secret dislike for this lazy, irresponsible man whose life was the contradiction of everything he stood for.

"All right," said the blacksmith, "if it has broken as you say, bring it in

and I'll fix it for you."

Zurdo went on shouting:

"I don't care about the crowbar, but nobody is going to cheat me. How many poor Indians have you done the same thing to! And they don't dare complain about it."

The blacksmith laid down his work and looked at the man with blazing eyes:

"Listen, that's enough out of you. If you don't want to bring in the crowbar, here's your money."

And he threw two soles down on the anvil, which Zurdo hastily grabbed up.

"So you think you can crawl out of it that way? And those who don't complain are just out of luck?"

The blacksmith walked over to him: "Get out of here before I break your neck. You scurvy, lazy hound. Did you ever do a day's work with that crowbar? You probably sold it. Get out of here, get out of my sight."

Zurdo went out and began to shout from the middle of the street.

"Here's a cheat ... This isn't a blacksmith but a liar ... Let him come out where everybody can see him ... Let the cowardly thief come out. . . "

The idle, curious townspeople began to congregate in front of the shop.

"Didn't you know it?" Zurdo went on shouting. "This fellow Prieto is a thief. He fixed my crowbar with old melted-down iron instead of steel. Now he's pretending to be offended. Let the cowardly thief come out. . . "

Jacinto Prieto came out, red with indignation, intending to say something to the spectators; but he did not get a chance, for Zurdo pulled out a knife with his left hand and made a lunge at him. Prieto side-stepped the blow, and as Zurdo fell he caught his hand and, twisting it hard, made him drop the knife.

"Let go of me, you cowardly thief."

The blacksmith lost control of himself and began to punch Zurdo, who

managed to get back on his feet after being knocked down three times. Then, as though he were a snake that had lived too long, Prieto grabbed him by the neck and squeezed. Zurdo writhed and gasped.

Then came a shrill pitiful cry:

"Jacinto, what are you doing?"

The blacksmith came to his senses. He let go of Zurdo who dropped to the ground bleeding, his nose crushed and probably several ribs broken. Indeed, what was he doing? There was his wife crying, hanging on to one of his heavy arms. The police came and took charge of the situation. Zurdo, his eyes shut, lay panting on the ground.

"You come with us, Don Jacinto."

The circle of spectators broke up. The blacksmith went into his shop, put on his shirt and coat and came out.

"Let's go," said the police.

And for the first time in his life Jacinto Prieto entered a jail.

Zurdo got a lawyer and swore out a warrant charging him with assault and battery and attempted murder. Prieto engaged a lawyer to defend him. Witnesses were called. The blacksmith had in his favor the fact that he had been attacked first, but he could not present the "corpus delicti," that is to say, the knife. Somebody had picked it up during the quarrel. It looked from the proceedings as though it would be a long-drawn-out affair.

His wife brought him a summons dated some days back to appear as a witness in the Rumi suit.

He said to her:

"You know, I've been thinking the matter over and I believe all this was a put-up job so I could not testify. Zurdo didn't stop until he got me into trouble. The crowbar was all right. Who doesn't know what a lazy good-for-nothing he is? I'll bet it wasn't even his; he probably stole it and wanted to have it fixed so he could sell it. I told him to bring it in and I'd fix it, but he wouldn't have it that way. I gave him back his money, and that didn't satisfy him. What he wanted was to get me into trouble. Maybe he wanted to kill me. But now they are going to try me for assault and battery and attempted murder, and that will do the trick. Why did the judge wait so long to hold the

preliminary hearing? They will disqualify me as a witness, and, in the meantime, I'm in a fine mess."

The apprentices could not do first-class work, and the shop lost trade. Jacinto Prieto's oldest boy, who could have managed the work, was away in the army doing his military service. His number had been drawn, and instead of trying to hide or get an exemption, as the rich do, he had patriotically presented himself for service.

Jacinto's cell was dark and damp, and sitting there, doing nothing, the cold ate into his bones. How would the defenseless Indians get along in their suit? His poor wife cried, the shop was barely making expenses, and his son was away, serving his country. They would surely take the villagers' land from them. Jacinto Prieto grew more and more skeptical about his native land. Why did it permit so many corrupt authorities, so many abuses by the rich and powerful, so much thieving? His patriotism had been as firm as steel, as sweet as eating after work, but maybe the country was not for the poor. . . .

There was no one who would testify in favor of the community. The poor were afraid, and some of the rich, who could have done it, found some excuse to refuse, and then said:

"Why should we interfere on behalf of the Indians?"

Iniguez called up boundary experts and they stated that the stones showed signs of having recently been moved, which led them to believe that they had not been there very long. Some of the stones had dirt on them, which would have been impossible if they had been washed by even one winter's rains. Bismarck Ruiz explained to the villagers that, unfortunately, he was unable to disqualify Zenobio Garcia and Julio Contreras as the file of the charges against them had disappeared. And it would be useless to bring up the charges again now, since nobody would testify, knowing they were on Don Alvaro's side. But there was great hope in another direction.

Day after day Rosendo Maqui, accompanied by the selectmen or outstanding men of the village—the mayor was anxious to have as many villagers as possible see the trial at first hand—went back and forth from Rumi to the town.

"Roast some corn, Juanacha. Tomorrow we're going to watch the

trial."

Juanacha had become somewhat skeptical:

"Again?" she said.

But she prepared the corn, and Rosendo and his attendants, at the crack of dawn, started out for town. By the time the sun had come up they had already ridden many miles.

"Don Bismarck said he needed money for stamped paper."

"Yes, and he said he wanted four chickens but I haven't got them."

"Today we'll just give him the money."

Bismarck Ruiz, like many cowards, added meanness to his wickedness, and he not only robbed the Indians of their money, but, taking advantage of the situation, sponged lambs, chickens, and eggs from them. He thought he was very clever, exploiting their good faith. They wanted to please their defender, Don Bismarck, who wrote so much on those big sheets of red-lined paper!

When the Indians reached town they found the courtroom closed because the judge was sick or off in the country on business; the offices were jammed with people and Don Bismarck was swearing because, said he, nobody paid him. They paid him.

If, on occasion, they were able to talk with the high-ranking exponents of the law, they received promises. The other Indians and half-breeds hanging about, some sad, some impudent, made remarks when the villagers asked a question. It was all a bewildering labyrinth of stamped paper.

"It won't be long now, it won't be long."

Always the same answer from the lawyer, the clerk, or the judge, if they got a chance to talk to them. They sometimes saw Don Alvaro enter the courthouse, dismounting from his silver-bridled horse, his spurs clinking, his poncho carelessly tossed over one shoulder. Bismarck Ruiz would say to them:

"The pleading I am drawing up against Don Alvaro is going to knock him cold."

And he showed them a thick sheaf of papers written in clear, fine

handwriting. Sometimes he read paragraphs to them. It was a theoretical defense of the Indians, the communities, and the land. Some of the phrases seemed battle cries. The Indians, never suspecting that a defense must be based on articles of law, on definite proofs, on clearly worked-out assumptions, felt their hearts rejoice and were full of praise. Bismarck smiled as he swam about in a sea of abject happiness. As soon as he had accepted the five thousand soles, they gave him another thousand; and now, on purpose, he played up the pathetic note of injustice so that, if by any chance the case should be appealed, the higher court would think the defense had been drawn up by a demagogic agitator. Oh, these stupid Indians!

When they got home, everybody gathered around to hear what Rosendo and his attendants had to tell. Indians from other places also came to find out how things were going. And all of them, listening to and repeating the same old story, realized that they were making no progress at all. And, deep within them, they began to come to the conclusion that they were Indians; that is to say, because of that they were alone.

The community had to go on living its daily life in spite of its sorrows. The cows and horses were taken to the pastures and given their ration of salt. An occasional tame donkey got his share, too, but the others took advantage of their freedom to run away to their old haunts along the Oeros River. There were ravines over that way where on deep, exposed strata of the earth white, salty copperas gathered. The wild asses licked it, and this, together with the wild sugar cane, the warm climate, and their freedom, kept them glossy and spirited all the time.

Twenty good loggers of the village went to the gorge to cut beams and boards for the school roof.

And time went on with the early-rising sun and bright nights, the sky a dazzling blue by day and burnished with stars by night. Until September, when thick gray clouds began to pile up, but sailed over the clear sky and disappeared.

Love sang on joyously in many young bodies, and with all their strength—the happy fruitfulness of man and earth—the mature and the old defended their hopes.

But poor Mardoqueo seemed very changed. The swelling of his back

had gone down, but the whipping seemed to have blotted out his whole life: the past with its sowing and reaping, and the future with its hopes. He was grim, silent, shut up in himself, and the coca he chewed all the time must have had a bitter taste.

"What's the matter, Mardoqueo?"

"Nothing."

And he went back to his silence and his coca, and the rug, intended for the school, awaited in vain its continuation by the skillful hands of the weaver.

A squad of blue-coated mounted police rode into the village. Rosendo thought, as he saw them arrive, that they were probably going through the pretense of looking for Fiero Vasquez. There were ten of them, armed with rifles, under the command of a sergeant. They drew up before the mayor's house and the sergeant said, pulling out a paper:

"Listen, mayor, call up these twelve men right away."

He read off a list headed by Jeronimo Cahua.

"What for, sir?"

"None of that what for stuff. Have them called up right away, otherwise you'll be responsible for whatever happens to them."

Rosendo sent his son-in-law and Juanacha to call the men on the list. In a little while they came, followed by members of their family, and the sergeant ordered them to line up. Their fear was reflected in their eyes.

"Take aim, and shoot anyone who tries to run away," the sergeant ordered his men. "And you, Indians, hand over those shotguns you use without a license. I'll give you five minutes to answer and if you don't turn them in, you'll be under arrest."

The men who had been denounced consulted with the mayor and decided to hand over their guns. What else could they do? It was worse to be arrested. They sent their families to get them, and a few minutes later they were in the hands of the police. There were twelve

old, single-barreled guns, rusty and rickety.

The villagers, still breathless with surprise, talked the matter over. It had all happened so quickly. How had they found out about them? Suddenly one said: "The Magician!"

Of course! The Magician had inquired on his last visit who had shotguns, pretending he wanted to buy one for a goatherd at Uyumi. They had almost forgotten about it. And then they realized that here was a broad, carefully thought-out plan. . . .

The black shadow of the outlaw crossed the village the following day and stopped before the house of his friend. Casiana came out.

"Where is Don Rosendo?"

"At the town for the trial."

"Those trials last a long time, but I know that they have taken away the shotguns and that means that something is afoot. I am over on the other side of El Alto now, in those high black rocks. If there's any trouble, have them send for me or you come yourself."

"All right," answered Casiana, recalling Valencio's revolt, and thinking of him, of Vasquez, and of all the other strong men in trouble with the law who were with them. . . .

The shadow galloped off in the direction of Muncha.

One morning the news was that an old woman had gone down the main street at midnight, crying. Her weeping was deep, sad, disconsolate, and she disappeared in the distance like a lament. The earth had turned into a woman, sorrowing, no doubt, for the fate of her children, the hapless community.

Earth, mother earth, sweet, unhappy mother!

Part Three

8

The Verdict

September came in and passed amidst clouds and fears. October arrived with its veering wind, bringing sudden gusts of cold, and blowing eddies of dust through the square, over the hillsides, and on the roads. Under the roofs and the eaves it howled angrily, and it flapped people's ponchos and skirts about like flags, and broke off the new shoots and tore off the leaves. Its invisible claws scratched at the flesh of man, plant, and earth.

Thus the wind of October burst in and the villagers received it with their habitual calm. It would wear itself out in its attacks against the firm earth, a strong tree, in rain as dense as a wall. But there was another wind blowing, an invincible one, that threatened the community's very existence, and to whose challenge there was no answer of Nature. And, after all, that was the only answer the villagers knew. They were country people, knowing only the wisdom of the land, guiding their life by it, and knowing nothing else. Before, that was all they needed to know, and besides, they could not have learned anything else. Now, in the face of rampant sheaves of paper, that is to say, the new law, they were unarmed, and their hope could do nothing but affirm itself in the love of the land. But that was not enough for this kind of a struggle and they had to go to town to deal with lawyers.

Rosendo Maqui thought of leaving Bismarck Ruiz, of whom he had become suspicious; but, when he tried to engage another of the "juridical defenders" who practiced in the capital of the province, they all refused. One said to him:

"Why should I lose prestige defending a lost cause? You can thank your lucky stars that Amenabar isn't taking everything you have."

Ruiz kept on encouraging the villagers with great optimism. He told them that the confiscation of their shotguns had nothing to do with the trial. It was only that the government had given orders to disarm everybody in the north because it was afraid of a revolution. He told them . . . It would take too long to tell all Bismarck Ruiz's lies and

promises, all the judge's and clerks' subtleties and chicanery, all Amenabar's schemings. The villagers lost heart, and Rosendo felt that he was living in an unhealthy atmosphere, foreign to his conception of life, menacing as a cave where the stealthy claw can wound with impunity. Away from the earth, the only harvest seemed to be the fruits of evil. The judge himself, who seemed so upright, had not moved a finger to impose respect for the law when the poor were afraid to come and give honest testimony, for fear of arousing the wrath of a rich man.

The mayor called the selectmen to a meeting. In two days they would have to go into town to hear the judge's decision. There was nothing left to do. Their ordeal was coming to an end. Perhaps they would not lose everything. Perhaps less than they feared. Perhaps . . . When Rosendo reminded them of old Chaqui, the one who had said the law was worse than the plague, their bones shuddered with the suffering of centuries.

Nobody could doubt, looking at Rosendo Maqui, the four selectmen, and the few villagers who had gone along with them, that the worst had happened. It was late, night was already falling when they came back, a silent, huddled-together group. It seemed as though the very horses had caught the sadness of their riders, and their long, shaggy necks drooped low. If there had been good news, several members of the commission would have galloped ahead, shouting it to the village. They all rode up together and there was silence between them. By the light of the fires they rode through the village to Rosendo's house. He spoke in a loud, harsh voice:

"Tell them what has happened so everybody can think it over and form his own opinion. Day after tomorrow we'll hold the annual assembly . . . there we'll decide what we're to do."

The selectmen and the villagers went toward their houses. Sebastian Poma held out his sinewy arms to his father-in-law, and Rosendo dismounted, grateful for the help, and entered his house with heavy tread. Sebastian and Anselmo asked him few questions, but eager groups were waiting before the houses of the others. Gradually they broke up to talk matters over among themselves.

"They're taking away the lower part up to the Ocos River, between the hills and the brook. . . ."

"What good is that rock pile over by Muncha?"

"The uplands of Yananahui as far as the hills on this side up to El Alto ... that's what they're leaving us. . . ."

"Oh, the damned—"

"We shouldn't give in."

"What can we do? We haven't even got shotguns."

"Porfirio's got a rifle—"

"We shouldn't even think about him. He doesn't belong here."

Neither Rosendo nor any of the others who had heard the decision had understood the terms very well, for they were couched in a legal phraseology and involved style that were more entangling than a briar patch. Bismarck Ruiz, pretending to be deeply affected, had explained them one by one. Neither did they understand, in that welter of words, what was meant by "period of appeal," which the shyster took good care not to explain and which nobody noticed. Finally the judge, "by consent of the party of the first part and the party of the second part," had set the date for the handing over and taking possession for the 14th of October. This was clearly specified. Everybody understood this. Today was the 9th. What was to become of the community? What was to become of each one of them? Where were they to raise their stock? Where would they plant their crops? Would they have to swallow their pride and go to work as hired hands? Everyone expressed an opinion or slowly began to form one. That night the fires burned until late in Rumi.

When day came it was as though everything had spent a bad night. The earth was covered by a heavy fog that seemed unable to lift, nor could the somber eyes brighten. When the fog finally rose it clung to the sky in dark, heavy clouds. On the faces of the villagers another storm seemed to be brewing. Rosendo and the selectmen were waiting as anxiously as the people for the meeting that was to be held the next day. The villagers gathered in groups according to their ideas. Rosendo, contrary to custom, called a council meeting in the morning. The leaders and the people had prepared their criticism, their defense, their suggestions. There had never been an assembly on which so much hung.

After the council meeting Rosendo sent for Augusto Maqui.

"Today is the tenth. They are coming on the fourteenth. I have thought that you ought to go and see what is going on at Umay. You remember what they did to poor Mardoqueo. For that very reason I have picked you, because you are my grandson. I don't want people to say that I never give my own family dangerous jobs. Ride your bay, I know you like him. Leave him somewhere in a hollow, and wait till night before you go in. If you can, go to one of the renter's houses; if you can't, try to find out what's going on at the ranch."

The jet-black lock that fell across Augusto's forehead shaded one of his bright, gleaming eyes. He listened to his grandfather's orders without saying a word. He knew that if they caught him they would flay the skin off him with their whips, and perhaps kill him; but he said nothing. His grandfather put his hand on his shoulder, and patted him on the nape of his broad neck. His hand looked very old and wrinkled alongside the boy's firm skin.

"You understand: you are my grandson and I love you and I make you take this risk. Duty is a hard master. Get started."

Augusto got his bay and saddled it, put on his darkest poncho, and went to say good-bye to Marguicha. It seemed to her as though they were tearing him out of her heart. Her breasts began to tremble and she was on the verge of tears when she pulled herself together and even tried to smile. She would not shake his courage. She said to him:

"You'll come back, Augusto. . . ."

A pair of large black eyes, full of tears, watched the horse and rider, his poncho blowing in the wind, as they disappeared around the bend.

Rosendo mounted Frontino, and, followed by Goyo Auca, riding a black nag, set off for the district of Uyumi. The better of the two roads to that place went through Muncha. He did not want to pass that way and he took the other, over part of which the boy Adrian Santos had traveled on his way to the roundup. Rosendo and Goyo passed easily through that wood—an outpost of the forest—where Adrian had been on the point of getting lost. Then they went through the gorge of Rumi, made their way up a goat trail that climbed above a vortex of rocks, and finally skirted the broad slopes along which the path ran like a zigzag border. Behind one of these, on a pleasant slope, surrounded by stubble and the lowing of the herds, lay the village of Uyumi. The church with its long-necked tower looked very pert, and

the house of the priest was really vain. With its height and tiled roof, it could look down in scorn on the thatched, flat roofs of the other inhabitants. Rosendo and Goyo stopped before it, and the priest himself, Don Gervasio Mestas, came out to receive them.

"Come up, good people. I am honored to see you in my lowly dwelling."

Rosendo and Goyo managed to make out that he wanted them to come in. The priest brought out several chairs and he himself sat down, inviting them to be seated too.

And he said to one of the servants who appeared:

"Bring out grain for the beasts of burden. Hurry."

Don Gervasio Mestas was a Spaniard, some thirty years old, talkative, fair, fat, who changed his cassock after Lent, and whose parish comprised Uyumi and several villages and ranches in the vicinity. His language was high-flown, if one bore in mind the people to whom he addressed himself. His servants, after a time, had come to understand him. The rest of the people hardly knew what he was talking about, but, for that very reason, they looked upon him as a very wise man. Rosendo and the villagers held him in high regard, too, if not for his language, which seemed to them that of a foreigner, then because he had always behaved well toward Rumi. There had been priests who left a bad memory of themselves.

There was that Chirinos, a negro and Indian half-breed, the devil, who charged all he could and took advantage of the girls. Once he locked one of the prettiest girls in his room, and when her mother went after her he said she wasn't there. Then the mother began to scream and aroused the villagers, who kicked and dragged Chirinos out of the town. And not because of his principles. The Indian, child of the earth, understands the human aspects of religion. They did it to punish the abuse of power. It's all right for a priest to want a woman; he's a man, after all; but he must not take advantage of his position to ravish her. That Chirinos never came back any more.

There were others who came to officiate at the saint's feast. One turned out to be a drunkard. The other had a very disagreeable voice and was no good for the high mass on the saint's day. The third was rather careless.

But then came Don Gervasio Mestas. There was a preacher for you. And how he could bless and chant. He had the cross right at his finger

tips. He did not overcharge, and if he had a woman he did not hurt anyone by it. Besides, he always gave good advice. And for that reason Rosendo and Goyo were there.

"Tell me, good people, what brings you here?"

"Taita priest," answered Rosendo, "we have come for you to give us your advice. What shall we do about this calamity that has come upon us? Tomorrow we have an assembly and we have come for Your Reverence to enlighten us. You see. . . ."

Rosendo related all the details of the trial over the boundaries, including the decision that had gone against them.

"And can nothing more be done, is there no possible step that can be taken in the litigation?"

"Father, our lawyer says it's all over."

"What a pity, what a pity."

The priest sat turning the matter over in his mind. The villagers hoped that out of this meditation would come some idea that might be of use, for he was said to know law; but when he spoke it was just to say something, making an effort this time to be clear:

"A real misfortune, especially for me, doubly so, for both parties to the suit are parishioners of mine, and dear to me. There is Don Alvaro Amenabar, a perfect gentleman, and you people, devout members of my flock. It is a real misfortune. My mission is not to deepen the divisions between people. On the contrary, it is to pacify and unite them. Only the love of our fellow men, in God's merciful love, can bring happiness to mankind. Pray, pray, and have faith in God, great faith in God, who is our best counselor. The treasures of the earth perish. The treasures we lay up in Heaven are eternal. Suffering and faith, faith in divine Providence, will open the way to eternal happiness in the arms of our Lord—"

"But, Father, what shall we do?"

"Obey God's inscrutable designs and have faith. My calling makes it impossible for me to advise you in any other way. Pray and trust in God's mercy. Blessed Saint Isidore watches zealously over the community. Never forget that. . . ."

Father Mestas raised his index finger and looked upward:

"Obey the commandments, which are the commandments of peace and love."

"And, Father, what about Don Alvaro? Shouldn't he obey them too? He is a Christian too. . . ."

The priest fixed his eyes upon them.

"That is not for us to judge. If Don Alvaro sins, God will call him to reckoning in his own good time . . . Go in peace, good people, and may faith illuminate your path and give you strength to bear your hour of trial with a spirit of Christian resignation."

A violent struggle was going on in the breasts of Rosendo and Goyo when they left. They had always thought of God and Saint Isidore as the protectors and defenders of the treasures of the earth, the harvests, the flocks, the health and happiness of mankind. The fact is that they had not thought much about Heaven. And now it seemed that they should really have been thinking only about Heaven. And yet, they could not help loving the earth.

When they reached Rumi the mother of Augusto, that sly, mischief-making Eulalia, came up to Rosendo.

"Is my Augusto coming home tonight?"

"He will not be back tonight," answered Rosendo.

"Where did you send him? When will he be back?"

"When God wills it."

Eulalia turned away sobbing and wailing aloud, but her husband Abram took her by the arm and told her to keep quiet. Eulalia knew how heavy the hands of the wrangler could be and she quieted down.

Augusto Maqui rode along the uplands, keeping away from the traveled roads, slowly, killing time. In the late hours of the afternoon he saw in the distance the plain of Umay and descended toward it down a steep gulch against whose rocks and tall grass his poncho and his horse were almost invisible. At the edge of the plain he led his horse into a thicket, tied him short, and hid beside him, waiting for night to fall. Life was so beautiful! Even the chirping of the cricket

recalled happy hours. He was young, they both were young—sweet Marguicha!—and they had a right to live. But his grandfather had said: "Duty is a hard master." Good old man! He reminded Augusto of an ox that has plowed long and well. Each one must turn his furrows and now it was his time. A woman both gives and takes away courage. Nevertheless, she is sweet. This was the first time he had ever had a job of this sort. And, for the first time, too, he wished he had a revolver. If they caught him they would kill him. He had got it into his head that if they caught him they would kill him. He had nothing but his machete hanging from his belt in its leather sheath. What good is a machete against a revolver or a rifle? Now that it was too late, he regretted it. If they caught him they would kill him. "Duty is a hard master." Marguicha, Marguicha! The shadows were closing in, the thick shadows, the friend of Fiero and Nasha, of the ox Mosco and the bull Choloque, of the tired fields, and of those who seek their secrets.

Augusto came out of his hiding place, making his way through a pasture. To one side, or rather dividing it in two, ran a tree-lined road. The tall poplars thrust up into the night. A herd of horses pounded in the distance. Augusto stretched out along a wall. At least the darkness was now impenetrable. The firefly of a cigarette gleamed. Two riders went by like specters and stopped at the end of the poplar lane. They were not a quarter of a mile from the bay nor more than ten steps from Augusto.

"Put out that cigarette. They could aim by it."

"Do you think so? They haven't any guns and I don't think Fiero Vasquez is going to take a hand. It's just Doña Leonor's nerves."

"Don Alvaro said, too, that we should be on the lookout. Hand me the bottle so I can take a swallow."

"I hear a horse galloping somewhere."

"That's right."

The darkness was a solid block and Augusto could see nothing but the glow of the cigarette. Straining his ears, he could make out the sound of the horses' hoofs. These herders must be Indians or half-breeds to have such good ears. He could hear them smacking their lips over the liquor, and then they got their guns ready. The well-oiled bolts clicked smoothly. The sound of the horses drew nearer. Six or eight horses rode up and the air crackled with tenseness.

"Halt!" shouted one of the sentinels.

The group of riders came on.

"Halt!" he shouted again, and a shot lighted its thundering flame and whined piercingly through the night.

The horsemen stopped.

"Who are you?"

"From Umay."

"Who?"

"Mendez."

One of the sentinels galloped toward the group. There was a sound of laughter and then they all came on and joined the man who was waiting.

"Well, Mendez, why didn't you stop? Have a drink."

"Aren't you being efficient!"

"Orders. How many of you are there?"

"Seven; poor old Snorer is sick."

"Does he snore much?"

"I hope so. He's got a lot of broken bones."

"Broken bones?"

"The other day an Indian pushed him over the side of a cliff when he went up to see about the irrigation water. Those Indians over by Huarca are getting out of hand."

"Bullets would teach them a little respect. What did they do to the Indian?"

"They would have killed him but he got away."

"We ought to find him if we didn't have so much to do."

The new arrivals had, to use their own phrase, dried up the bottle. They went on their way, hoofs and talk making a noisy accompaniment. Augusto decided to follow them. If he kept close to

the wall and his footsteps were covered up by those of the riders the watchdogs of Umay would not hear him. He climbed over several stone walls that divided up the fields into forage crops and grain fields, and when the riders went through a gate he slipped into an orchard. It was a grove of peaches that smelled very sweet. The odor of lemon trees was intermingled with their fragrance. He was hungry and he ate a few peaches. He wasn't so afraid now, for the ranch was alive with shouts and neighing, and nobody would notice him. A little further off someone was singing. He went in that direction keeping to the orchard wall. He saw a room lighted up by a broad-chinnied lantern. The herders who had just come up were eating, some at the table, some standing, talking with the men who lived there. The singer who was half-drunk, was trying to sing a yaravi. Nothing they were saying could be heard distinctly. Augusto began to think he probably would not find out any more.

Time went on. The singer stopped to drink and then began again, more off-key than before. Two of the herders stepped out on the porch, talking, and, after a glance at the orchard, they came toward the very spot where Augusto was hiding. His blood froze in his veins. Should he run? The dogs would hear him. Hide. He squatted down and the men came right up to the wall. They walked along it and he could hear the heavy sound of their hobnailed boots. Then they stopped. The faint glow of the distant lantern lighted up their broad hats.

"Listen, Mendez, you don't want to talk too much in front of that fellow that's singing. I think he's pretending to be drunk so as to hear all he can without anybody suspecting. Don Alvaro says the Indians know things they couldn't know if there wasn't a spy among the servants or the herders. The more I think about it the more suspicious I am of that herder. He came by here saying he had been working in the Pataz mines. As Don Alvaro is going to start working a mine, he hired him. He's a tough one and he acts as though he was sick of living. For all we know he may be one of Fiero Vasquez's gang."

Augusto recognized the voice of one of the sentinels. The one called Mendez said:

"Those dogs make me see red. I don't know why we stand for it. We ought to put a bullet in him."

"It's only a suspicion. We don't know anything for certain. He enjoys shooting, and we may need him when we take possession of Rumi."

"When is that?"

"The fourteenth. With you men who have come and others who will come tomorrow, or the day after at the latest, from all the different parts of the ranch, there'll be twenty of us. The subprefect is coming with twenty troopers. I doubt if the Indians will do anything, but it's just in case Fiero decides to take a hand."

"Why don't they catch Fiero?"

"The police? Not that they wouldn't like to, for he's made monkeys of them, but, at the same time, they're afraid of him. And there aren't enough to handle him and his band. They'd have to call out the militia, but that's a horse of a different color. You see, Fiero helped Don Humberto del Campo y Barroso when he ran for senator. You remember the name? During the campaign, when Don Humberto was coming to this town, it was said that his enemies were going to ambush him and kill him. So his supporters got Fiero and fifteen of his men to accompany him, and nobody moved a muscle. So you see how it is. They would sooner try something against Don Alvaro, whom nobody in the whole provinces dares to buck, except those Cordovas, and their day is coming. . . ."

"The fact is that Rumi—"

"Don Alvaro will take it over, all right. Fiero has twenty men at most, some of them poorly armed, and there'll be forty of us."

"But they're good shots."

"It doesn't matter. We can manage them."

"And how do they know that Fiero may step in?"

"The Magician got it from one of his band. But Rumi will be taken over and tell your men to keep an eye on that fellow. Don't you see? He's drinking now to make us believe he's a drunkard. Don't say a word before him about the police or anything."

"But if you're suspicious of him it would be better not to take him. What if, in the confusion, he should shoot Don Alvaro in the back?"

"That's what I say. We'll have to tell the boss."

"Maybe he isn't a spy. Maybe there are Indians snooping around and that's how they know things."

"No, because they turn the dogs loose—there are four mastiffs. They're chained up now so they won't bite the herders who are coming in, but later we'll turn them loose. Besides, I should think they would have lost their taste for spying after the skinning an Indian by the name of Mardoqueo got. A hundred lashes, tied to the eucalyptus tree in the court."

"Maybe, but I think it would be a good thing if we all went out and searched the ranch thoroughly. Then we could see. . . ."

Augusto felt his heart thudding. The herder stood there, thinking over the words of the other, the recently-arrived Mendez, and, either because he did not take much stock in the idea of spies lurking about, or because he did not intend to take lessons from anybody because he was nothing less than the foreman of all the herders, he answered somewhat ironically:

"You're getting as bad as Doña Leonor . . . She thinks Fiero is going to come right up here. Let's go have a drink. That fool is still trying to sing."

The talkers strolled over to the bunkhouse. The other herders had finished eating and they were playing cards, all except the drunk who kept on caterwauling the same yaravi.

"Shut up," the foreman yelled at him.

The horses were in the pastures; an occasional call was heard in the growing silence of the night. Augusto thought it was time for him to be going, and taking off his sandals to make less noise he started back. As he climbed over the orchard wall again, a piece of it crumbled and the stones made a noise as they fell. The furious barking of a dog shook the night air and suddenly a yellow dog jumped over the wall and fell snarling upon Augusto. The boy dodged him, and the dog, probably trained for this, jumped at his throat. He fended him off with his arm, but the dog's teeth caught his poncho and tore it. But at this same moment Augusto's machete came down on the dog's neck and it dropped with a piercing howl. All this had taken place in a moment. Shouts and running steps were heard in the bunkhouse. The hoarse voice of the mastiffs was hammering at the night.

"Let loose the mastiffs!"

Augusto's body felt limp and seemed to refuse to obey him, but he mastered himself, and, as a sudden memory flashed through his mind, he ran across the fields—for the darkness was in his favor—zigzagging

back and forth across his own track to the foot of the wall, and then out to the middle of the pastures. There was the sound of shots, and bullets came whistling through the air. The voice of the mastiffs could no longer be heard.

Were they panting behind him? No, for his zigzagging tracks had thrown them off the scent. His stratagem had been successful. One dog seemed to be running about in the orchard, barking furiously, unable to pick up the trail. The men were in there too. They undoubtedly thought the spy was hidden in the trees.

Meanwhile Augusto had reached the place where his horse was hidden. He was suddenly fearful that he might not find it. But there it was, showing up against the darkness. He mounted and set out, before the dogs could pick up the scent on the other side, up the steep trail that climbed to the highlands. He was far up when he heard the dogs barking below and the men shooting blindly after him. The bullets went wild. It occurred to him that another group of herders might be coming toward him. They would surely stop him. What could he say if those shots at his back made them suspicious? His good bay snorted, climbing the slope. Fortunately, nobody was coming; in a minute he could leave the path. And there it was, the road to Rumi, wide, inviting, and though a stiff wind was blowing Augusto did not even feel it.

It was morning when he got back to the village. Augusto showed Rosendo his bloody machete.

"A dog," he explained.

And he told him at once everything he had learned from the herders. The old man kept his eyes on the red steel and the torn poncho. He made no comment on the news. When Augusto finished, he said:

"You have done well. Go get some sleep and be up in time for the assembly."

Augusto went home and, without paying any attention to his mother's scolding, he threw himself down on the bed. Marguicha came in a little later, went softly over to where he was lying, and, with a loving look, she kissed the sleeping man.

At noon ten mounted herders rode up to the village. They galloped at

full speed down the main street, almost riding down two children, and entered the square, shooting and shouting.

"Long live Amenabar!"

And the volleys went off in the air.

They stopped in front of the mayor's house. Rosendo and the selectmen were talking over the news. None of them moved. They sat quietly in their places.

"Tell us, you old fool, who was the spy you sent?"

"Why did you send a spy last night?"

"Talk before we let daylight through you."

"They killed my dog Thunder."

"You'd better talk, you old devil. We'll kill you."

Rosendo sat with great dignity, answering never a word. The herders, half-drunk, were disconcerted by his scornful silence.

One of them said:

"Who would kill an old idiot like that!"

They laughed hard, pulled up their horses, and, still cheering Amenabar and firing off their guns, rode off. As they went down the main street they said:

"See you on the fourteenth."

"See you on the fourteenth."

The wind tugged at their wide hatbrims. Their rifles gleamed in the sun.

The assembly began in the late hours of the afternoon, as the sun was casting the shadows of the eucalyptus trees that encircled the church across the square.

The mayor and the selectmen sat on maguey benches at the edge of the porch of Rosendo's house. They had intended to build a meetinghouse after they finished the school, but now they didn't even want to think about that. The villagers began to arrive—men, women,

children—and squatted or sat on the ground. Many stood up, forming a semicircle around the others. The children were not going to talk or vote, but they were there so that they could hear about the trial.

Rosendo's face was set in a stern, severe expression, and he held his liqueu staff in his right hand. He looked very old. Like a weather-beaten, storm-wracked tree. He felt tired. These last months had taken their toll of him, withering his body and crushing his heart. The villagers peered at the wrinkled, stormy face; some felt that he had done everything possible; others, that it would be hard to find words of censure against this man.

The villagers kept coming and coming, crowding together, mingling to form a colorful mass of shawls, skirts, and ponchos. Everybody watched Rosendo as he sat silent, calm, solemn, thoughtful, almost as though he were alone in his responsibility. He was always the leader because of his wisdom and sense of justice, and nobody ever thought the selectmen carried much weight on important occasions. To one side of Rosendo sat the rocklike Goyo Auca, on the other the brave, prudent Clemente Yacu; farther over the not entirely accepted outsider, Porfirio Medrano, and beyond him the white, powerful Artidoro Oteiza. There was not one of them to compare with the mayor.

The mayor, for his part, looked out over his people without fixing his gaze on any one in particular, just letting his eyes wander. These were the people of the community, Indians and half-breeds, for a few white or light faces emerged from the welter of brown faces, and an occasional stubby black beard broke the smooth lines of the race. There were Amaro Santos and Serapio Vargas together, like the devoted friends they were. They were the children of soldiers, like Benito Castro, who was absent, and Remigio Collantes, who had died, and they had been raised in the community by their mothers' families. On the side sat Paula and Casiana, the former the wife of Doroteo Quispe and linked to Rumi by her marriage bonds, the same as Selectman Medrano. Casiana was not in quite the same situation, but Rosendo had extended membership in the community to include her, on the pretext that they could use an extra pair of hands. The truth is that if the population of Rumi had not increased of late through the admission of outsiders it was due more to the harassment of the ranchers than to the refusal of the villagers. There were still some who were reluctant to accept them, and they would not hesitate to use the present crisis to justify their prejudices. Miguel Panta huddled up to keep out of sight. He had let the Magician stay in his house. Now he regretted it and, although he really had nothing to reproach himself

with, he wished he had had no part in the affair. Augusto Maqui sat at the end of the row facing his grandfather, and Rosendo gave him a brief glance.

They were crowded together, here, there, forming groups according to their opinions. Here was the communal village farmers, herders, children of the earth, rooted in it for centuries which now, like a tree, felt the tragic shock of uprooting.

Among them was Eloy Condorumi. His six feet stood out above all the others and he was so broad that he took up place enough for two men. He had no outstanding skill. He was noted only for his size and strength, and, to be perfectly honest, not even for that. He never tried to be the first in the community tasks, like Goyo Auca, the "show-off," and he belied his size by sitting for hours on end at the door of his house, doing nothing. When there was something to be decided he had good judgment, but, as a rule, he kept quiet. He was sitting with his arms folded across his breast and his small head was covered with an old, battered hat.

Over there was Chabela, now a mature woman, somewhat faded; no one would suspect her of being that pretty girl whom Silvino Castro ravished. When Abram Maqui arrived he seated himself at the feet of his father. Nicasio Maqui, the maker of spoons, a simple soul, came forward, too, and gave his father an orangewood spoon, delicately carved and polished. In his ingenuousness he hoped to comfort his father in his hour of trial with this humble token of his love. Rosendo put the spoon in his pocket, giving his son a look of deep tenderness. Nicasio smiled and disappeared among the crowd. Rosendo's other sons were already there: Pancho, Evaristo, and the womenfolk. It was hard to make them all out. The one who was in plain sight was Mardoqueo. Many of the people watched him. He was sitting on the ground, close to Abram Maqui. He was still taciturn and sullen, steadily chewing his coca. . . .

Time went by. The sun had lengthened the tremulous trees of shadow on the ground. Rosendo said something to the selectmen. A ripple ran through the crowd and then it settled down in tense expectation. Rosendo began to speak.

His voice was deep, a little hoarse, somewhat monotonous. He spoke of the work of the year, the increase of the herds, the amount of the harvest. This year would have been like any other year, or better, because the crops had been better and they had a school they were finishing. But the suit with Umay had spoiled everything, and the

assembly seemed to be waiting only to hear about the trial.

Finally Rosendo said:

"And now, people of Rumi, I will speak of the misfortune of the community, of a trial and a verdict."

The silence made it possible to hear the dry rustle of the eucalyptus trees. Another sound was heard above their heads. It was a huge condor, flapping its wings, heading into the sunset. Could it be an omen? Rosendo understood the workings of the human heart, and he said:

"We see this condor and it frightens us because we are all thinking now of our community. Bad times have come upon us and we are looking for signs. Everybody can think what he likes. I am going to tell you what has happened and I want us all to decide what we are to do."

The old man was unable to control his feelings. His deep, hoarse voice lost its monotony. At times it broke in a sob, again it rose in imprecation. And so he told of the efforts, the hopes, the disappointments, the scheming, the perfidy, all the episodes of the trial to the sentence and its terms. He ended, saying:

"And this is how things have gone, villagers. We fought all we could. Money and evil have triumphed. Bismarck Ruiz said the trial would last a hundred years and it took only a few months. It doesn't take long to try a case when it's a poor man that is being sued. I saw that nobody wanted to testify for us, and the one who was willing to was put in jail. Friends whom we had received hospitably, like Zenobio Garcia and the Magician, betrayed us. What could we do? No other lawyer would take the case. What could we do? Misfortune has come to us. It is not the first time it has happened to the communities. Now I ask: Shall we go to the marshy meadows and the rocky uplands of Yananahui, or shall we stay here? If we stay here we'll have to work for the Umay ranch, and we know the slavery that is. Now I want the assembly to say what it thinks we ought to do, and if it thinks what we did was wrong."

Rosendo stopped talking. His poncho rose and fell with the panting of his weary old breast. It seemed that nobody had anything to say. They looked at one another without venturing to speak. Several names were mentioned in a low voice. They were those of the villagers who had had the most to say about the trial. Had people forgotten how to talk?

Such despondency hung over all of them that perhaps they thought words were useless now. Someone cleared his throat. It was Artemio Chauqui, a strong, heavy-set Indian. He fidgeted a little. At last he managed to say in a voice he had to hold in control to keep from screaming:

"In my house they say my great-grandfather foretold this evil. Now I want to ask, why didn't we hold an assembly sooner, before the suit began? Then we could all have thought it over, not now when there's almost nothing to do—"

"That's right, that's right," spoke up several approving voices. And Chauqui went on:

"I want to ask the mayor and the selectmen if the voice of a villager no longer counts for anything."

The sounds of approval grew.

"That's right. Let them answer."

Now it seemed as though everybody wanted to talk at once. Moreover, it seemed as though the assembly were rising against its leaders and were going to throw them out of office. Goyo Auca drew his small body to its full height, and spoke:

"We thought the trial was going to last longer. But, now that Artemio Chaqui is criticizing things, let him say what we did about the trial that was wrong. What would he have done? What would you have done, Artemio Chaqui?"

Artemio Chaqui made no answer. Goyo Auca, encouraged by the silence, went on:

"Let all those who are talking so loud say what they would have done. One by one, let them say what they would have done."

The silence became still more complete. And Goyo Auca, before sitting down, said somewhat scornfully:

"Wrong ... It was wrong ... It's simple enough to say what the other fellow did wrong, but it's not so easy to say what he should have done. Who knows the answer?"

The question was in the nature of a challenge, for it was plain that nobody was going to answer. Things were back where they had

started. Jeronimo Cahua, the best hunter and one of those whose rifles had been confiscated, said:

"About going, I don't think we ought to go and give up the community. It's our job to defend it. Nobody can take it from us if we all defend it, with machetes, with stones, with sticks, even with our fingernails. I lost my gun, but I've got my sling..."

This started a noisy discussion. Jeronimo's point of view had supporters. It also had opponents. The visit of the armed herders had given them a glimpse of Amenabar's strength. Others thought that arms should be bought with the community funds held by the mayor. Others said they would only be able to get a few and there was not time enough.

"The thing is set for the fourteenth."

"We've only got two days."

At this point Casiana got up and left the assembly. When she heard them say "two days" she understood the gravity of the danger, and her thoughts flew to Fiero Vasquez. She must do what he had ordered: go and tell him what had happened. She slipped quietly away without anybody noticing her, and in a few minutes, the noise of the discussion still ringing in her ears, she was on her way to El Alto. Meanwhile, when the hubbub had quieted down a little, Augusto Maqui spoke up:

"Last night I was at Umay. I can tell you for sure that they are coming with twenty troopers and twenty herders, all armed. What good would slings be?"

Some went on urging resistance. Porfirio Medrano got up:

"I've been a soldier, though I've only done guerrilla fighting. It's easy to sit here now and say, 'Slings, machetes.' Do you think they're going to come alongside us so we can reach them? They'll shoot from cover. And afterwards—you know what they're like—they'll kill even our women and our children."

Doroteo Quispe shouted:

"Let's call our friend Fiero Vasquez. He's got armed men."

"Yes... yes... let's call him!"

The assembly rose like a wave. Rosendo Maqui took off his hat and got slowly to his feet. His stern eyes, which gleamed under his white locks, imposed silence on the crowd. Then he spoke in a loud voice:

"No, no. I'd like to have him come, but that would make things still worse. That would be the end of everything, of everybody, of the whole community. Some of us would be killed, others, put in jail, others would have to go to work as hired hands. We might hold out three months, six months... but then the troops would come and wipe us out. We can make the land of Yanañahui good if we try. Life is for those who work the land. Things have gone well with us on the land until now. It won't be the same on the rocky uplands, but it won't be bad."

The villagers had never for a moment stopped thinking about the land and this gave them confidence or at least hope. Many were of the same opinion as Rosendo: they still had land and, though it was not good, it could be cultivated. They loved their way of life, their life on the land, and they could not bear to lose it. Rosendo was right. But there were others who favored resistance.

One shouted: "Old coward!"

At this Evaristo Maqui, who was quite drunk, began waving his arms and shouting:

"Who said that? I'll give the scoundrel something. Just let me at him."

Rosendo Maqui got to his feet again. His son went on shrieking and gesticulating with his drunken arms. The old man made a sign to Condorumi, who, with a blow to the chin, knocked the babbler flat to the ground. Rosendo quietly sat down again. This attitude disconcerted his adversaries. He had imposed discipline on his own son, yet, at the same time, he had maintained his composure, taking no notice of an insult, and ready to answer every attack. The other villagers were won over to a friendly attitude. Nobody said anything more. Some of them waited for the taciturn Mardoqueo to support the idea of resistance, but he went on chewing his coca and looking at all of them without being aware of them.

Then Rosendo said:

"We'll vote on this, for there are different opinions. Those who favor resistance, raise their hand."

Ten arms were raised beside Jeronimo Cahua's. After a slight

hesitation several others, here and there, raised theirs toward the cloudy sky where the first colors of twilight were appearing. They did not come to twenty. To the great surprise of all, Mardoqueo sat there without moving, not backing up Jeronimo. What could ail Mardoqueo? His attitude was very distressing, and now he was behaving queerly. If he was so angry, the natural thing would have been for him to want to resist and fight.

The assembly continued rather uneventfully. Some thought they ought to hear Don Alvaro's terms for working, whether he would let them keep their land and their pastures. The majority rejected the idea. When Augusto told them the rancher was planning to work a mine, nobody ventured to say another word on the subject. A man known for his common sense, Ambrosio by name, said:

"I think we ought to go right away, before Don Amenabar gets here and starts ordering us around. And besides the rains will be coming and we've got to get our houses built as soon as we can."

This line of reasoning finally convinced them all. The exodus was to begin the next day and they would do their best to get it finished before the day for handing the lands over. In spite of everything a feeling of utter disillusionment hung in the air. It often happens that a majority decision does not really convince the very majority that made it. It had been agreed that they were not to resist; now they had agreed to leave; and yet they would have preferred something different, a better decision, but there seemed to be no way of reaching it. And so they sought to elude their own responsibility by putting the blame on somebody else. Secretly, like those plants that grow at the bottom of a pool, their animosity toward their leaders began to kindle again.

Meanwhile the night had come, the darkness was blotting out the tops of the trees. The angles of the unroofed school walls were still visible. Some of the villagers brought up wood and eucalyptus bark to start bonfires around the assembly. The fire played over their faces and, as it flickered, made the shadows dance. The darkness seemed deeper outside the circle. There was only the rectangle of light that shone from the chapel, and a huge star that began to gleam overhead. The hills had disappeared.

Casiana, by this time, was far away, almost up to the rocky outcroppings of Rumi. Was the village on fire? She hesitated for a moment, not knowing whether to go on or turn back; but she saw that the fires remained stationary, and she understood what had been

done. So she kept on, without resting, though she was so tired that her ears were throbbing with the same rhythm as her blood. She loved the community and wanted to save it. The path bristled with stones against her bare feet, and the wind, which beat at her sides, seemed to hold her back. But she toiled on, upward, holding up her full skirt a little so as not to step on it as she climbed the steep slope.

When the fires had started and were burning well, the mayor spoke of the election of authorities for the new year. It was always done so, and if the assembly was satisfied with the harvests and roundup they re-elected the same men. Occasionally they changed one of the selectmen. Rosendo, as we have seen, had kept the post of mayor ever since he assumed office. But the mounting discontent was threatening to unseat him. The assembly could, to be sure, change its mind, as often happens. A squabble of shouts and gestures broke out.

"Let them go!"

"Let them all get out!"

"We need new people!"

"Down with them!"

"Let's get rid of Porfirio Medrano!"

There were others who defended them. The personal arguments, the contradictions, and the shouting would have befitted any of the legislative bodies that represent civilized peoples. The opposition discovered its candidate.

"Doroteo Quispe for mayor," somebody suggested.

Doroteo had been in favor of calling in Fiero Vasquez; he had voted for resisting. The malcontents were favoring him now for those very reasons which the assembly had rejected.

"Yes, yes, Doroteo." The shouting was on the increase.

Doroteo said nothing. He pursed his mouth until it came out as far as his nose, and his little eyes were wary. Fat and dark, with his bristly hair and his stooped back, he looked more than ever like an Andean bear standing on its hind legs.

"Doroteo for mayor."

Rosendo looked at him calmly. Then he said:

"Doroteo would make a good mayor. Let's vote."

But Doroteo asked for the floor.

"I can't," he said. "Where do you get such ideas? I can pray a little and I know something about farming, but I don't understand one thing about governing. And even if I did, Rosendo knows more than anyone."

Now the malcontents began to take stock of their situation. No doubt if anyone of them had been proposed as candidates they would have said the same thing as Doroteo. It gives one a clearer idea of another's responsibility when one is face to face with it one's self. Nevertheless many kept on shouting:

"Let them go!"

"They were no good!"

"Get rid of Medrano!"

"Out with the old fellow!"

A woman came forward and took her place beside the mayor. It was Chabela. Her face was set in a gesture of defiance which the play of light and shadow on her strong features emphasized. Her shawl fluttered excitedly as she freed her bony arms.

"Who is going to do things better than Rosendo? Ever since I can remember I've seen him doing what was good and avoiding what was bad. He has grown old in the service of the community. In these hard times he has fought and he has suffered more than anybody else, because he's old, because he's the mayor, because he's the one who has to take the responsibility, and because he's good. The other old men have been sitting in their houses. He has ridden one trip after the other. How could he make anybody go on the witness stand if they didn't want to? How could he make anybody defend the case if they didn't want to? Miles and miles he's traveled on our business; insults and offenses he's had to swallow for our sake. Look at him now, sitting there quietly, his staff of office in his hand, patiently and serenely waiting while they turn him out. He's so good he even forgives ingratitude. But nobody is going to turn him out. Where is the man with the coward's heart who dares insult him and forget what he has done? Who is the woman to whom he has not been a father? He's

going to stay on, he's going to stay right on, our beloved, our good old Rosendo."

Nobody spoke a word. When the voting took place the beloved and good old Rosendo was supported by a great majority. Even Mardoqueo voted for him. Rosendo got to his feet and took off his hat as he expressed his thanks. The firelight threw a rosy gleam over his white head, as when the snows of Mt. Urpillau are touched by the setting sun.

All the selectmen were re-elected, too, after some discussion, with the exception of Porfirio Medrano. He was, after all, only an outsider who had been taken in; and some, because of this circumstance, and others, because they were suspicious of him, opposed him vigorously. Artemio Chauqui headed the opposition. The younger men, led by Augusto Maqui and Demetrio Sumallacta, tried to defend him, for they were very fond of Juan Medrano; but it was useless. The majority of the villagers, won over by glib suggestions, approved, as a prudent move, at least, the removal of the outsider. Porfirio was a good loser and he unassumingly and quietly left the seat he had occupied. Chauqui was nominated for the post of selectman. The young men, who were determined, at least, to record their protest, assembled their forces and managed to elect a young herder, Antonio Huilca. As he went to take his place, he deferentially patted Porfirio Medrano's shoulder. Some of the older men acidly remarked that the young men were getting more out of hand every day.

The mayor declared the assembly to be over and the crowd slowly dissolved. They knew what they were going to do, and this, though it did not take away their sadness, at least gave them a feeling of security. Rosendo asked the selectmen to stay to arrange for the details of moving. He said to Porfirio as he was leaving:

"This misfortune has upset them . . . Patience."

"Patience," answered Porfirio.

As he stepped off the porch his wife, his children, and some friends were waiting for him. There was nothing they could say to one another and they began to walk slowly away.

The bonfires burned on a long time, lighting up an assembly of shadows.

Casiana finally reached the uplands of Yananahui. The night was very dark and it was hard to walk. She could not see the horizon nor the jagged hills of El Alto, but she guided herself by the wind, and keeping it always at her right shoulder she went on. She felt very tired and would have liked to sit down for a moment, but her eagerness to find Fiero and his band kept her going. At the beginning her feet had been hurt by the rocks on Rumi, but now they had swollen and were numb. Her ears rang with the pounding of her blood and the whistling of the wind. Her heart was thudding under her full breasts. She walked and walked, barely able to see where she was going. And now the ridges of El Alto were beginning, rocky and hostile. Fortunately she found a path and followed it. It was so small it was almost invisible in the darkness. But it soon disappeared and there she was among the rocks without knowing which way to turn. After she had lost the trail she felt more alone than before. If only the moon would come out a little. There were only a few stars and the heavy, damp wind bespoke a clouded night.

She followed along what seemed a very steep slope, although she could not see to the bottom. The shadows were thick there forming a dismal chasm. Casiana's instinctive fear was offset by a bravery made up of strength and experience. In the very steep places she edged along, clinging to rocks or to the branches of the bushes. The thorns pierced her hands. Her feet began to hurt again, her whole body seemed strangely heavy, and she was afraid. At last she was down the slope safely. Before her lay another plain and across that would certainly be another chain of rocks. Would she be able to cross it? She began to despair of finding Fiero. Why did he go so far away? Then she realized that she was a fool to ask why he went so far away. It was probably past midnight now and the assembly would be over. This was the only assembly she had ever seen. What would the villagers decide? Ah, here were the crags again. It seemed as if they came forward to meet her. It was as though they struck her in the breast. If she could only have leaned against them and cried! She had to climb them and get over them, making her way around the slopes. Once more she started ahead. The wind was very strong and she was benumbed and half-asleep. If fatigue and sleep were to overcome her she would surely freeze to death. She was going to freeze, grow stiff, die. She would not let herself be conquered either by sleep or weariness.

The ground was rocky in places and bristling with thorny plants. The

wind roared or howled like a savage dog. The bushes shook under its impact, making a vast muffled sound in which was mingled the shrill whistle of the tall grass. Casiana felt all these noises and sounds mingling and echoing within her to form a sort of hidden tempest. Was she going to get dizzy and fall? She pulled herself together and kept doggedly on. Why had she started out in the night through these places she did not know? She had barely seen them from the distance. It might be that she had lost her bearings and was going in the wrong direction. The wind, the rocks, the bushes, the grass were the same everywhere, unyielding in their resistance, prolonged and repeated God only knows how far. On and on she went, reaching out with her arms in search of support that was not there. Never in her life had she felt so tired, and to this was added a giddiness that put her in danger of falling time after time.

Her back hurt and her temples throbbed as though they would burst. But maybe she was near now. She would have called out if it hadn't been for the wind, which would have drowned her cry in the confused noises of the hills and the hollows. She waited for an opportune moment to shout. She could only call her husband by his nickname, Fiero, for she realized that she did not know his name. Vasquez? It did not have the right sound to carry well. She would call her brother Valencio, but the wind was howling again. It was howling and roaring. She kept on walking. Suddenly there came a pause of deep silence and she screamed:

"Valencioooo!"

Perhaps it was the crags that were answering her. Was that a dog barking in the distance? It was probably the wind, stubborn, persistent, bearing on its back the voice of frozen, far-off places, the sinister, hoarse voices of boundless space. Probably what she was attempting was useless, and she must surely be sick because she felt very weak and she was on the verge of falling every minute.

"Valencioooo!" Her own voice sounded queer to her. "Valencioooo!"

The night was indifferent to her call, to her plight, to her suffering and that of the others. Nobody could hear her, and she would fall and freeze to death in this frozen, endless night.

"Valencioooo!"

Was that a dog? She could not stand up any longer. In another minute she would fall and she would not be able to get to her feet again, she

would be crushed to the earth under the black mountain of the night.

"Valencioooo!"

Her cheeks were cold and wet with tears, her head kept whirling, and she felt as though she were going to faint. Yes, it was a dog barking, and close by.

"Valencioooo!"

A dark shape rubbed up against her skirts, gave a short bark, and disappeared again in the thick darkness. Could it be a shepherd's dog? Maybe it was Valencio's? Now that she had been found by a living creature, even if only a dog, she could sit down for a little.

"Valencioooo!"

She sat down and then fell back on the ground. She was comfortable now, even though she might die. The wind blew over her and the chill of the earth penetrated into her flesh. The dog came back again. In a moment there was a rattle of stones a little way off. Casiana sat up, filled with hope.

"Valencio!"

And a deep, heavy voice answered, a voice of the highlands, a known, loved voice.

"Casiana!"

The dog guided the man to where she lay. Casiana threw her arms around his neck and burst out crying.

"I have suffered so much. I'm so tired. I kept falling and I was afraid I'd freeze to death and die."

"Rest now."

It was the same old Valencio, rough, stolid, and he did not say another word. He sat down beside his sister and after a minute he took off his poncho and spread it out behind her.

"Rest now," he repeated.

Casiana stretched out and touched his arms and chest. They were bare. It was the same old Valencio. Then her fingers touched a gun. No, it wasn't the same Valencio.

"Is he here?"

"He's away on a trip."

"What trip?"

"Just a trip."

"Oh, what shall I do? I came to tell him the community is in trouble."

"Overseers?" asked Valencio.

"Worse."

"Then it is bad."

They said no more. Casiana rested for a long time. The dog was near, sniffing about, and Valencio squatted with his face buried in his arms. After a while he said:

"Let's go."

"Where?"

"To the caves."

Valencio went ahead guided by the dog. They both seemed to know the place well, and Casiana, following behind them, no longer stumbled over stones and roots. She had rested a little, and although her bruised feet and pricked hands still hurt it was not so hard to walk.

The wind had died down and a pale light began to show in the sky. Dawn was coming quickly as it always does in the uplands, and in the little depressions of the earth the cold panes of the frost could be seen. In the hollows there were squat bushes, and here and there, in the high, bare places, defying the wind, patches of yellow grass. But they finally reached a height where there was nothing but rocks, jagged into a thousand peaks, and boulders, black, reddish, blue. Valencio turned down the slope of one of the hills. He skirted it and then started to climb again. Down in a hollow there was a group of horses. At this point paths along the slope became visible, trails, a faint, but real impression that human life existed here. Suddenly they reached a cave. Casiana saw as she came in a man wrapped in a poncho, bearded, with long hair that hung below his ears, seated beside a fire where he was cooking something in an iron pot.

"Didn't I tell you?" he remarked. "It was a woman's voice."

Valencio did not answer him but set to work preparing a bed of sheepskins and blankets. Casiana looked about her trying to get the feel of her surroundings. The floor was of dirt and the walls and roof of the cavern were rough and, in places, damp. She could hardly see anything at the back, perhaps because she was not used to the darkness, but she could make out the blurred shape of jars, bundles, and two saddles. The bed was ready and Valencio told her to come and lie down.

"Rest now."

The sheepskins made it very soft and everything smelled of the strong tobacco Fiero Vasquez smoked. The bewhiskered man tried to atone for his roughness by making his language as pleasant and amiable as he knew how:

"Now the nice little soup will be ready in a little while, and then we'll cook ourselves some nice dried beef."

But Casiana was already asleep.

She woke up when it was almost night. At first she was frightened, but then she saw Valencio beside her. Her brother had grown a little fuller in the face and his skin was somewhat darker. Casiana wondered if it just seemed so to her because her eyes had grown accustomed to the white skin of the Oteizas and the lighter color of the Indians in the temperate zone. But the bearded man's skin was very dark too.

"When will he come? He told me to let him know—"

"He's far away, but I'm going to call him."

"Can you call him when he's far away?"

"With a bonfire."

The man with the beard handed Casiana a gourd full of thick soup and another of broiled dried beef. As he did so she saw for the first time that he had only one arm.

"You see, Casiana, the chief went on a trip, far away, and he told us that if anything happened we were to call him with the bonfire. Valencio is going up to start it on the top of this hill, which is kind of separated from the others, where it can be seen well."

"And when will he come?"

"He's far away and it's a very bad road. If he sees the fire maybe he can make it by tomorrow night."

Casiana thought everything was lost.

Valencio made up a big bundle of wood and straw, slung it across his back, and holding it by a rope set out. Casiana went to the entrance to watch him but it was getting dark, and the man, bent under his load, climbing almost on all fours up the steep slope, soon vanished from sight among the tumultuous boulders set in the darkness.

Casiana sat down on the edge of the bed and accepted another helping of soup and meat. The fire burned bright, throwing out a pleasing warmth and holding at bay the invasion of shadows, which were massed at the mouth of the cave, struggling to get in. At times the flames snapped as they leaped up, and the bewhiskered individual said the fire was talking and something was going to happen.

"What is your name?" asked Casiana.

"My name? They call me El Manco."

His black beard was threaded with gray hairs. His large eyes were listless and dull. He had a pug nose and his forehead was hidden from sight under the drooping brim of his hat. He sat huddled up by the fire, all covered over with his poncho, and only an old shoe showed under it.

"It was a terrible misfortune the way I lost my arm. We had gone on a trip, far away, and the ranch we were going to attack was down in a warm valley, and one of the hands saw us and cut through the fields to notify them. And they were ready for us when we got there, and we couldn't do a thing. I got a bullet that smashed a bone, and that wasn't the worst, for three were killed. There were several who were wounded severely. That time we came back with our tail between our legs, and taking roundabout trails to throw them off our track. And then my arm began to hurt me badly and started to swell. Some said it was because of the motion of riding, others, that it came from rage over losing—for they say anger makes wounds inflame. When we got here they fixed it up, and I hollered like a stuck pig, but the arm got worse and started to turn black. It was rotting. There was one of the men who knew how to cut; he used a razor and a fine saw.

"He said to me:

"'What do you want? To rot completely or for us to cut off your arm?'

"I wasn't very anxious to go on living this miserable life so I didn't answer.

"But the boss said:

"'Cut it off.'

"One got hold of my head between his knees and held my jaws shut, and others took me by the legs and the good arm. Then the cutter said:

"'Hold him,' and began to cut.

"I twisted and roared and the brute went on cutting, for it wasn't his body. I almost passed out, and when they let me go my arm was off and I was sweating as if I had run a mile. They put salves on it and I got well. And that same day the dirty dogs took my arm, as if it was a joke, and dug a grave for it and put a cross over it as though it was a dead person. A storm blew the cross down and I never knew where my arm was ... Ah, Casiana, that suffering is the worst recollection of my whole life."

"The worst? Haven't you ever killed any one?"

"Well, yes, those are bad memories too."

The one-armed man was silent for a moment. Casiana waited for him to go on.

"You surely want me to tell you how I got into trouble and all that. What can I tell you? There are some who doctor things up to make it seem that they are innocent victims. Here we all know each other, and since nobody cares whether you're good or not, we tell the truth. You never heard such wickedness. Though I will say that one who killed through no fault of his own was your husband. But he himself says a body gets used to evil. It does amaze me to see how he rules them all, even the toughest of them, and they all respect him and are afraid of him. There are probably some in the gang who would like to kill him, particularly if he's pulled them up somewhere, but they would have to think twice because there are others here who love him like a father.

"Over that way are the caves where the others stay. He sleeps here with me and Valencio. When he picked us out to sleep here, he said:

'"This Valencio is loyal, and besides he's now related to me in the bargain. I've told him. And you, Manco, you've got a good ear and you're a light sleeper, so you'll be the watchdog. Besides, as you're one-armed, if you should ever feel like killing me you'd have to think it over because of your infirmity.'

"So we came over here, and I like it because he sometimes gives us good stuff to drink, and besides we don't have to stay with some of those fellows in the other caves who are too foul. So we two are staying here to look after the horses and to signal him if anything happens. But about what I told you, don't ask me, for I am a low criminal. Only God can forgive me if He can forgive. But I will tell you this: He has to forgive us or otherwise we wouldn't be God. What would be the difference between Him and sinners if He didn't? I hope that's the way it will be and I believe in God. There are some who don't believe or else believe too much. I don't believe God is managing things here in the world, and that's why there's so much evil . . . He's up there and I am waiting to see His face and have Him forgive my sins and make me good."

The wind began to howl, but could not penetrate the cave.

"What about Valencio?"

El Manco told a long story. The substance of it was that when Valencio was brought in by the two members of the gang, they all said as they looked him over:

"He is either a savage criminal or a meek lamb."

He had not turned out either one or the other. They gave him food and he ate until he could hold no more. Then, bothered by the questioning and the staring, he went out of the cave into the fields. He came back at night and lay down by the entrance. Fiero Vasquez told him the next day that he was to look after the horses and he agreed. He soon learned to handle them and saddle and ride them. He even began to ride them bareback through the brush, to the astonishment of the others who thought him good-for-nothing.

One day one of the highwaymen went to hit him and Fiero defended him. From then on Valencio was devoted to him. Once they all started away on a trip, and El Manco and Valencio were left behind in the lair the same as now. Not in this one, in another one, about twenty leagues from there. El Manco said to him:

"We must be careful not to let any stranger come up here." And he

explained to him about the colors of the different uniforms.

"Overseers?" Valencio asked. He thought all bad men were overseers. El Manco told him yes.

One day two mounted troopers came up that way. Valencio, slipping between the rocks, managed to get within about twenty yards of them, threw a stone at the one in front, hitting him on the head. He fell heavily to the ground and this frightened the horse of the one coming behind. It began to buck and Valencio ran toward them just as the second trooper fell off too. He pulled out his knife and threw himself at him.

"Valencio!" screamed El Manco.

The trooper had dropped his rifle while the horse was bucking and he was at his mercy. Valencio stood over him, knife in hand, until El Manco came up. He told him they would have to take the trooper to the cave and tie him up until Fiero came back and decided what to do. They did this, and then they brought in the other trooper whose skull had been crushed by the stone, and they took over two good horses, well outfitted, and two still better rifles. The prisoner told them that they had been sent out to explore that region for bandits, and afterward a squad would come in and round them up.

In a few days Fiero arrived with his men.

"You people give no quarter," he said to the trooper, "so you can get ready to die."

The trooper pleaded with him:

"Don't kill me! I've got a wife and four children: ask whatever you want of me, but don't kill me!"

Then Fiero answered him:

"If that's the case, that makes it different. You go to town and when they get ready to go after us, you tell that woman who has a wine shop just as you come into town. If you deceive me, we'll meet again one day." The trooper left, and soon after that they saw that he had kept his word.

The chief said to Valencio:

"Now that you've got yourself a gun, let's see you learn how to use it."

And he learned to shoot very well. It tickled everybody to see how their horse keeper was coming up in the world, except the fellow who once had wanted to hit him. They had remained enemies, and a growing hostility kept them at swords' points all the time.

One day they insulted each other. As Fiero wanted no feuds among his men, he ordered them both to get their horses. They rode away with their knives. Valencio came back alone. He had another fight with the same outcome, and from then on everybody respected him. On their trips he was very bold, especially when they were attacking; but he was sometimes careless when they had to flee, and for that reason Fiero preferred to leave him. When they had to fight the mounted police—the overseers—there were few who could equal him, for he had an amazing aim.

Casiana listened to the simple story, thrilled, amazed, and stupefied. So Valencio could do all those things? She had supposed so from what she had heard Fiero tell, but El Manco's account made her understand fully the life her brother led now.

"He's lighting the bonfire by this time," said El Manco. "I hope the wind doesn't give him too much trouble. Until the fire is well started it puts it out instead of fanning it."

The night was as black as the one before and the same wild wind was blowing. It could not reach the cave because the rocks across from it held it back and it whined insistently.

"Shall we eat now, Casianita?"

"All right."

El Manco had boiled some potatoes to give variety to their meal, which was the same as far as the soup and dried beef were concerned. After they had eaten he said with the air of one who speaks from experience.

"Rest, for to really rest you have to do it twice."

Casiana curled up in her bed and the fire on the hearth was left to itself. The few pieces of wood burned themselves out and only the glow of the embers remained. The man fixed up his bedding and laid down. Casiana felt afraid. What if this horrible criminal were to do something to her? But the minutes went by and the man lay quietly in his place. Casiana grew calmer and sleep came over her, heavier and heavier, until finally she was wrapped in utter peace.

The man, meanwhile, was thinking about Casiana, or rather, desiring her. By the light of the embers he could see the profile of her body, her broad back, the mass of her hair. She lay on her side, her face to the wall of the cavern. Her breathing was regular, and the man, as he realized that she was asleep already, desired her more than ever. Her flight into sleep excited his desire to possess her. But Valencio! And Fiero Vasquez! They would kill him. Or else he'd have to kill them first. And as he was one-armed it did not seem very likely that it would happen that way. He did not have a revolver and it's a different matter with a knife. Besides, maybe the woman wouldn't let him, because she was probably in love with Fiero, and then he'd have to take her by force. The woman looked strong, too, and he would not be able to get the better of her with one arm. What a terrible misfortune to be one-armed. The woman's breast rose and fell with her breathing, that breast with its enticing outline which he had been looking at all day. He knew she would not give herself to him willingly and he could not overpower her. Maybe if he threatened to kill her—but then she would probably tell Valencio and Fiero. His sex tortured him. A red flame ran through his body and began to lash him and make him twist in his bed.

Casiana went on sleeping, indifferent to his silent appeal, to the tormented demand of his flesh, to the feverish vigil of his aroused sex. He hated her and he desired her. Her hip rose temptingly, but forbidden to him, a poor wretch, perhaps the most miserable of them all, one-armed and unable to seize, by fair means or foul, this morsel for his voluptuousness, for that ineffable delight that makes man eternally the conquerer and the conquered. If he could only manage to express all these things. If Casiana would understand. But she would refuse and, what was worse, she would probably start screaming for Valencio. The dog had gone off with Valencio. He would probably have to kill Casiana, and Fiero, too. And although Fiero was not a man given to torturing, he might very well begin with him. Imagine raping or killing his wife!

Fiero had said that he didn't keep a woman around so as not to have any privileges the others didn't. For that reason he let them off a couple of days every two weeks, every month. The highwaymen had their women around in the towns, on the ranches. El Manco never took advantage of his leave because he had no woman. Who was going to love a one-armed man? There were more than enough whole men to love and embrace. They didn't take him with them on their expeditions any more because he was no use, so he didn't even get a chance to intimidate a woman. And a woman was a good thing, and within her vitals there was a torrent of delight.

Casiana slept on. If only he could waken her, overpower her, possess her, and then flee. But no, he couldn't overpower her. And yet the idea of Valencio and Fiero began to grow dimmer in his mind, disappearing and leaving only the body of the woman and his savage, overwhelming desire, that longing in his flesh that was like a burning, consuming flame. If she tried to resist he would have to threaten her. He pulled out his knife and began edging toward her. He could hear her breathing close at hand.

But at that very moment there came a dull, thudding sound down the side of the hill, past the cave and into the hollow. It was a rock. Valencio had undoubtedly stepped on a loose stone and it had bounced down. So he was coming back. Maybe he was still far away. Maybe. But this new impression had crossed the path of the others, weakening them. The vengeful figures of Valencio and Fiero rose up anew. And, above all, the fear of not being able to overpower her and of losing everything without accomplishing anything. With sudden decision he put his knife away and went out of the cave. The wind blew upon him and he began to calm down. Now he realized that what he had been on the point of doing was madness. But he did not want to return to the cave until the brother came back. He still feared, hated, and desired that body sleeping there in the face of his loneliness. In a little while Valencio arrived.

"What are you doing here?" he asked in surprise.

"I heard a stone rolling down, and I came out to see if anything was happening."

"Nothing," said Valencio.

And the two of them, followed by the dog, went into the cave.

All through the afternoon of the next day they waited for Fiero Vasquez. He did not come. Casiana, meanwhile, by right of her authority as Fiero's wife, or, at any rate, one of them, looked over his clothes and began to darn the old ones and sew on buttons with a needle she carried in the crown of her hat and some thread she found in the cave. There were not many more things than those she had seen the morning of her arrival. Just some more bundles and some blankets lying over them. And a big, leather-covered trunk which Casiana imagined must be very valuable or, at any rate, very mysterious.

"There's no money."

And El Manco explained to her:

"Casianita, you don't keep money among thieves."

It was getting late at night and still Fiero had not come. They kept the fire burning until very late, waiting for him, but there was not the faintest sound of the most remote gallop. The dog sniffed around in vain, sickened on by Valencio. Casiana was very unhappy and told her companions once more that the community was in danger and that she had come to tell Fiero, for he had told her to be sure and do so.

"I hope he gets here," exclaimed El Manco.

The fire crackled on. They were going to put it out, but the woman begged them to wait a little longer. It must have been about midnight when the dog rose up and barked. In a little while they heard the noise of galloping horses. And a moment later came the sound of hoofs, neighs, and voices at the foot of the hill. There they were. Casiana's heart began to pound in her breast. Valencio and El Manco went down to meet their leader who, as soon as he heard that Casiana was there, rode quickly up the slope.

"Casiana."

They embraced one another. Fiero asked her about the community and Casiana told him all that she knew.

"So that was two days ago—yesterday, today—so tomorrow's the day. . . ."

"Yes."

"Tomorrow is the fourteenth."

"Yes, they said it was for the fourteenth. . . ."

"Are they planning to fight? Doroteo—"

"When I left they were at the assembly. Before the meeting Doroteo and Jeronimo and others were talking about fighting and they planned to call you. . . ."

Fiero rode down and began to give orders to his men. Casiana could not make out the words clearly, but she did understand the accent. It was the accent of authority, the clear, commanding accent that

distinguished Fiero from all other men.

Then he came up accompanied by Valencio.

"Casiana, we're going to start early. We have to give the horses a rest and let them eat a little. We've ridden all day and this much of the night. We're short of horses . . . we've only got enough to change the poorest."

He opened the trunk and began to get out shotguns and ammunition. There was Fiero, in his black clothes and with fifteen days of riding in his body, planning to help the villagers.

"We have to leave behind the guns that are not so good and hand out more ammunition."

Then he shouted for El Manco. When he appeared, Fiero said to him:

"Do you want to come, too? You won't be able to use a gun, but you can fight with your machete if we decide to attack."

"All right, boss," answered El Manco.

"Then saddle a fresh horse. Listen, what do the men say?"

"Their minds are made up. Some say that bullets are meant for men, not for young ladies."

"It will be a nice skirmish with the herders and the troopers.

"Come on and put your stick of wood on the fire—you know what I mean. . . ."

El Fiero and Valencio checked over the guns, and then stacked them against the wall. Afterward Fiero counted out a hundred Mauser, Winchester, and Malinger bullets for each man. This band lost in the summits of the Andes had a varied collection of arms. Down below shouts and neighs could be heard.

Fiero took out of a bundle a pair of fine, shiny slippers which he gave to Casiana, and then he went down with the men. Casiana tried on the slippers and they looked fine gleaming in the light of the fireplace, but that stupid Valencio did not say a word. There were times when Valencio really did seem stupid, because anybody else would have looked at the slippers instead of at the saddle straps which was what he was fixing. From below came the echoes of that beautiful deep

voice, so warm and so commanding.

Finally all became quiet, as if everything were watching the birth of the day. The black rocks gleamed in the glowing light. Fiero called out, and Valencio, taking his gun, went into the day. Then Valencio came back with El Manco, who carried away the two saddles and saddlepads. The others came and put the bullets in their pockets or in a leather pouch. These men looked very ugly and rough to Casiana. Finally Fiero himself came up and said to Casiana, "Come on." He had to take her by the hand to help her down the rocky path, for Casiana was not used to shoes and she kept slipping.

Fiero mounted his Tordo, that handsome, strong, black horse, and helped Casiana up in front of him. The outlaws mounted too. The impression of ugliness and roughness, given to Casiana by the two men who came for the bullets, was increased when she saw them all together. Fiero Vasquez, for all his scars, his pockmarks, his veiled eye, which disfigured his face, was less frightening than these men whose unmarred faces were stamped with the marks of rough weather, hatred, and fear. Their eyes were gloomy and murky, and deep wrinkles etched an expression of hopelessness, ferocity, brutishness, and bitterness on their faces. Those who had beards concealed beneath them something of the torment that always showed in their eyes. They all carried guns across their saddles and all wore ponchos except El Manco, who had taken his off and, to show that he was all ready, held the reins between his teeth while he brandished a machete in his right hand. The empty sleeve of his shirt was blown about by the wind with cruel irony.

"Valencio, hand around a drink," ordered Fiero.

Without dismounting Valencio took two bottles of brandy out of his saddlebag, and they passed from hand to hand, from mouth to mouth; until they were finally thrown, empty, through the air and shattered into a thousand pieces against the rocks.

"Everybody ready?" asked the powerful voice.

"Ready!" answered the others.

Fiero set out followed by Valencio and behind, in single file, twenty somber, resolute men. The sun was already coming down on their backs, and all the highland with its dark, lofty summits and its yellow grass fields had emerged from the light.

"What surprises me," said Fiero, leaning over Casiana, at the same

time that he put an arm under her breasts to hold her on, for Tordo's trot was very rough on the rising and falling trail, "what surprises me is that the trial ended so fast. One of those back there whom we call the Lawyer—because he's been in jail three times, in the penitentiary four years, and knows a lot about law—was talking to me last night. He says the case could have been appealed."

Casiana understood nothing of these matters and she said, changing the subject:

"I suffered so much getting up here the other night. I nearly died, I was so tired and so dizzy."

"Dizzy?"

"Yes."

"Did that ever happen to you before?"

"No."

"Then you're probably in the family way."

"That must be it."

But Fiero's thoughts returned to his present problems. He looked back at the men and saw that some were lagging behind because of the weariness of their horses.

"Hurry up! We've got to get there quickly," he shouted.

The highwaymen gave their horses a cut with the reins and soon drew near. Some of them had turned back the brim of their hats which gave them a more defiant air. The ground trembled with the beat of the horses' hoofs.

The villagers were suffering all the agonies of the Exodus. It was not only a mental anguish. Their very flesh suffered at having to leave the land where they had learned to walk and had grown up, where they had loved with the spirit of Nature itself as they sowed and multiplied, where they had thought to die and rest in the cemetery that held the bones of countless generations.

For two days men, women, and children steadily transported their things from the village to the plateau of Yananahui, on their backs or on horses, asses, and even on oxen and cows, which they led by a rope tied to their horns.

In these days the sunsets were very red and Nasha Suro said they foretold blood.

On the fourteenth they had their last meal around the hearths that had witnessed their daily life, and they departed carrying with them their few remaining possessions: some pots and gourds, bundles of blankets which in their brightness resembled the evening star, and a chicken or two that had not let itself be caught before.

Along that path, on which Rosendo came upon the snake, a long many-colored chain of ponchos and skirts wound in and out among the rocky embattlements of Rumi. An ass, wearing a wide pack saddle, carried the image of Saint Isidore, which lay on his back looking at the sky, and another, the famous bell with its clear voice. As they were taking it down it had fallen and given out a doleful peal. It was a strange procession, silent, brooding, in which the faithful kept turning their heads for another look at their beloved village. The houses seemed to beckon them back, like the little garden patches, the open church, the school with its bare walls imploring a roof. Everything called to the villager: the stubble fields of corn and wheat, Peana hill and the pastures, the canal that brought their water, the deserted roads, the broad square, the shade of the eucalyptus trees. Who of them did not have memories, many beloved memories, connected with a place, a fence, a wall, this meadow, that tree? All life there had the breadth and the depth of the earth, and with that earth they left behind their past, for man's life cannot be separate from the earth. And now in another earth, remote and unfriendly, they had to seek a new life. Their minds understood and obeyed, but their hearts overflowed with the rending sadness of their departure.

"Adios!"

The eyes of the women filled with tears and on the lips of the men were curses. The children could not understand very well what was happening, but they saw the square in which they used to play and call to the moon, and they, too, felt badly.

The village was utterly deserted now except for five men on horseback at the foot of the eucalyptus trees: the mayor and the four selectmen. They, too, saw at close range the pitiful sadness of the empty houses

and the fields without men or beasts. The earth seemed dead. The village, the good community village, toiled upward slowly and sorrowfully, bearing on its back, bent with the slope and sadness, a life cut down and reluctant to die, like a great fallen tree whose foliage, for a time, seems unaware of the destruction of the ax.

It was broad daylight as the last of the villagers disappeared from sight among the foothills of Rumi, and it was not long before the rancher and his cohorts came riding down the slope that led to the village.

Don Alvaro made his entrance between the subprefect and the judge; he was followed by one of his sons and Iniguez, and behind them, to the surprise of the villagers, came Bismarck Ruiz himself with the police and the herders. The cavalcade came on at a slow trot, circumspect and dignified.

The mayor and the selectmen came forward and met them in the middle of the square. They greeted the authorities. Don Alvaro said:

"And why don't you speak to me, you stupid louts of Indians?"

His bravery was nothing short of daring when he had a troop of armed men at his back. And he raged on:

"I had heard about your going off to that rock pile, leaving this good land so you wouldn't have to work. You lazy hounds! Your Honor, let's get this over with as fast as we can, because it makes me see red."

At this moment Zenobio Garcia made his triumphant entry, galloping up, carrying a rifle, and followed by two riders who were also armed. In his capacity as Governor of the District of Muncha he had come to see that order was maintained during the transfer. The first person he greeted was Don Alvaro, but the latter was so annoyed because Zenobio's assurances that the villagers would stay on had not come true that he did not answer him. The judge and the subprefect, to keep on the good side of the rancher, did the same thing when he said good day to them. Whereupon the governor sought to take rapid revenge, and greeted the villagers, but they did not answer him either. Iniguez, Bismarck Ruiz, and the overseers covered up ironical smiles.

"Come, Your Honor, let's get this over," repeated Don Alvaro.

The judge read a long involved proceedings in a solemn voice as clearly as his throat, irritated by the trip, would permit. Bismarck Ruiz had taken his place beside the villagers and he listened to the proceedings with closest attention, of which he made Rosendo aware, making suggestions to him in a low voice.

The ceremony reached the height of the ridiculous when Don Alvaro, in sign of ownership, had to get off his horse and roll on the ground. He did it with a half-serious, half-amused expression, and then got up, brushing off the dust that soiled the whiteness of his clothes.

Bismarck Ruiz signed in the name of the villagers who then started up the road to Yananahui at a quick trot. Zenobio Garcia and his men, who did not know what to make of the unexpectedly hostile attitude of these people, went off, too, crestfallen and abashed.

"At last we're done with that," exclaimed Don Alvaro. And he shook hands with his "defender," the distinguished jurist Iniguéz, to whom ostensibly belonged the victor's laurels.

And then, somewhat ignoring the judge and the subprefect whose tasks were now accomplished, the rancher called to Iniguéz and the two rode out of the village and stopped on a knoll.

"Over there," said Don Alvaro pointing to the hills that rose beyond the Ocos River, "lie the mine and the ranch I want to buy. If they won't sell it to me we'll have to go to law; for a few poor nincompoops can't be allowed to stand in the way of the progress of the mining industry which has such a great future."

"A great, great future," exclaimed Iniguéz.

"All right, I have told you what I need is man power. There are many Indians on that ranch, and as the owners, the Mercados, are people who never stay in one place they will sell to me. These community Indians have played me a dirty trick, but I think we'll find a way to bring them to terms."

"Exactly! Now we'll have more than enough ways."

"Friend, I'm going to have power and I'm going to be senator. Though for the moment, I'm planning to have Oscar run for Congress to get in an opening wedge. He has lots of possibilities which this trial has revealed to me. He thought up the way to counteract Bismarck Ruiz, the other lawyers and even Jacinto Prieto, who I thought had good sense and who has turned out a lunatic. Don't you think Oscar would

make a good congressman? Besides, he likes his drink, he's friendly, he's pleasant company, and he could even make good speeches."

"Yes, indeed, he's got many qualifications," Iniguez exclaimed once more.

Meanwhile Fiero Vasquez and his men had crossed the hills of El Alto, and, as they came in sight of the plateau of Yananahui, they realized that the situation was altogether different from what they had expected. There were people and cattle scattered about the plain in that confusion which characterizes the newly arrived. Doroteo Quispe and several others shouted, "Here they come," as they ran to meet the riders. Fiero let Casiana down and told her to find Paula, and began to talk with Doroteo, going straight to the point.

"Let's go! Perhaps the transfer hasn't been made yet."

"Come on!"

Behind the mounted men followed Doroteo Quispe, Jeronimo Cahua, Artemio Chauqui, and ten others. They had their machetes and their slings. Porfirio Medrano joined them, armed with his old rifle. They crossed the mesa and, as they came out above the thickets of underbrush, they were outlined against the sun, awesome and avengeful, so that one forgot that only a short time before they were a little group of men whose destiny was obscure. Fiero reproached himself for not having brought the few extra guns he had. It was because he was in the habit of thinking only about his band. Here he was now about to defend, in his own way, a just cause. He did not reason it out very much. He recalled only the sorrow of his own life. Ah, but there were the authorities already! He stopped to look at them and the villagers and riders gathered around him.

"Come on, come on!" shouted El Manco.

Rosendo Maqui was coming up the slope, accompanied by the selectmen. The band went to meet them, galloping noisily down the narrow, stony path.

Below, the troopers and herders had dismounted and were scattered through the square. There were ironical comments over Fiero Vasquez's failure to appear. And Fiero was now coming down, at a trot, and he stopped before Rosendo Maqui. At that moment someone

gave the alarm in the village and they all mounted, to be ready for any emergency. The rancher and the jurist, warned by the confusion, hurried quickly back from the knoll where they were standing. High above them, on an outjutting rock, the rough blurred silhouettes of the riders loomed against the sky. Fiero Vasquez and Rosendo were arguing.

"But we have handed it over already. Bismarck Ruiz himself signed for us."

"What! You ought to know that that dog has sold you out. The Lawyer is back there and he says you could have appealed."

"All right, but what if we win now? They'll call out the troops and crush us."

The community in mass had gathered on the high rocks of Rumi to see what was happening.

Rosendo went on: "They will kill all our people, and many, many Indians have already died uselessly."

"No, Rosendo, it's not useless. Blood calls for blood and the knife sometimes cuts its own user if he doesn't know how to handle it."

"That may be, but now don't get me into trouble. The assembly decided not to resist, and I am carrying out orders."

El Manco, who had put his machete in its sheath, was managing his horse with his right hand, making it curve dangerously near the edge of the cliff, and shouting at the same time, drunk with anger and daring.

"Come on, come on!"

"Hey, Manco, calm down," ordered Fiero.

And Rosendo:

"You probably think I'm a coward. There are times when it takes more courage to refrain from giving a blow than to give it."

"No, you folks must have your reasons, and I am not going to fight if you don't want to. I can't put you in danger against your wishes. Selectmen, what do you say?"

Goyo Auca answered for all:

"The same as Rosendo."

The herders and troopers were spreading out to form a line along the main street. Don Alvaro, his men, and Iñiguez were behind the eucalyptus trees. Bismarck Ruiz and the judge had gone into the church. The subprefect and the police lieutenant, in the middle of the square, were looking through a telescope, handing it back and forth to each other.

The black spot that was Fiero Vasquez showed in the middle of the lens.

"I hope they come down," said the lieutenant. "These lines of ours are tempting. I have put the outfit in the mayor's house, with the animals and everything. They are very high and far away now. They'd get away among the rocks."

They could see Fiero's gestures as he argued with Rosendo. It seemed that they were giving up the idea of attacking. Many of them were drifting away.

To be sure, Fiero ended:

"Well, then, let's go, so they won't think we are planning something."

They turned around and started reluctantly up the slope. El Manco came last, shouting that he was going to fight alone. Some of the bandits began to laugh.

A woman came running down the path. As she drew nearer they could hear her crying. She finally reached Rosendo and said:

"Taita Rosendo, where is Mardoqueo? I thought he was with you, but I don't see him. He spent all day yesterday chewing his coca, quieter and more brooding than ever. That's why I'm afraid. Where is he? Haven't you seen him? Hasn't anybody seen him?"

She looked from one to another, seeking Mardoqueo. Her eyes filled with tears again and her dark face was contorted in a spasm of grief. A sudden suspicion shot through the men and they looked down. Amenabar and his men were leaving, too, in order not to force a fight. There was no sign of Mardoqueo anywhere.

Suddenly Antonio Huilca said:

"There he is!"

There was a dark shape crouched on one of the cliffs that overhung the road as it entered Lombriz Creek. The road was still fairly wide and the subprefect and several troopers rode ahead, then two overseers, and after them Don Alvaro and Iniguez, guarded by the rest. They did not suspect the presence of one lone man among those cliffs. Those who were looking down grasped Mardoqueo's intentions. In front of him he had a big rock. But he was too far away even to call to him. Nevertheless his wife began to cry out fearfully: "Mardoqueo! Mardoqueo!"

Eee-ooo . . . eee-ooo . . . answered the hills.

Amenabar's men came on. The rancher said to the lawyer: "You see what cowards these Indians are?"

"As bad as the bandits. The minute they saw we meant business, they left. They venture to attack only poor innocent people," solemnly stated Iniguez.

"Listen to them now, how they're shouting. They are probably insulting and cursing us. The tongue is the arm of cowards."

"That's right, sir."

The subprefect and his troopers crossed the brook making the stones rattle. The rancher and Iniguez were a few steps from the cliff. Eee-ooo, eee-ooo. The shape moved. The rancher was now beneath it. A hard push and the big rock flew from the cliff to the road. There was a cracking sound as the stone hit Iniguez's skull and dropped to the ground between his horse and Don Alvaro's, which shied violently and then started to run. The escort party remained rooted in their places, letting out a long "o-o-oh!" as they saw the gray leap of the boulder and then Iniguez fall sidewise. He fell to the ground almost beside the rock, senseless, his skull fractured and gushing blood. The subprefect and his men turned at the cry, an overseer stopped Iniguez's horse, which was running away, and Don Alvaro managed to get his own under control.

Eee-ooo, eee-ooo. Mardoqueo stood for a moment as though paralyzed, and then started to run uphill. Eee-ooo, eee-ooo.

"He killed him with a rock," said the overseers and the troopers.

The subprefect ordered them to climb the slope, and as they did so they caught sight of Mardoqueo. Shots rang out and Mardoqueo ran between rocks and bushes, as though he were dexterously eluding the

bullets, for none of them touched him. Eee-ooo, eee-ooo. Suddenly, he dropped. The shots kept on. He managed to get to his feet and run again, though he was limping. His leg was broken.

The villagers who were with Doroteo Quispe and Fiero Vasquez's bandits roared:

"Come on, let's go!"

"Let nobody make a move!" shouted Fiero.

"Nobody!" shouted Rosendo.

They had seen them take a tripod from a horse and now a new weapon began to sweep the slope. Mardoqueo fell. The machine gun whined, raising the dust as it shot a dead man to pieces.

But El Manco, without looking or knowing what he was doing, had already started down the slope as hard as his horse could gallop, screaming insults that crackled like a whiplash. Casiana would never have suspected that this man was the same cripple she had seen sitting quietly by the fireplace, even though his shirt sleeve, floating in the wind from his mutilated shoulder, seemed to be making signs to her. The machine gun was now silent. At first, Amenabar's people had thought perhaps the rider was an emissary. But when El Manco reached the main street he let out a ferocious howl, and, taking the reins in his teeth once more, he pulled out his machete, brandishing it like a flame in the sun. The machine gun was on a cliff and the barrel swung around.

"Fire!" shouted the lieutenant.

A hail of bullets brought down horse and rider and chattered on for a moment over them while the echo shook the hills.

"Look what they had ready for us!" said Fiero.

A deathly silence, broken only by the sobs of Mardoqueo's wife, fell over the wooded gorges of Rumi.

Amenabar's men formed ranks once more, Iniguez's body was tied face downward on his horse, and they went on their way. When the slow cavalcade wound out of sight up the highlands, villagers and bandits came down to gather up their dead.

9

The Storm

The hills that surrounded the plains of Yananahui raised heavenward bare black rocks like threatening fists, like watch-towers, like unconquerable bastions. Or they were broken up into shapes resembling animals, men, or plants. The lower slopes were covered with rocks and pebbles among which flourished the whistling ichu grass and stunted, dark-green bushes. To one side of the plateau, hard against the peaks that looked toward Muncha, glittered the jet mirror of Lake Yananahui, which means black eye. It was wide and deep, and under the peaks grew a green rustling bed of rushes which was full of ducks and marsh hens. The hill of Rumi descended by stages and did not offer a very steep drainage pitch. At the other end of the plain, where the land was a little higher, were the ruins of stone houses, and a persistent wind whistled through the cracks and wept with the spirits of the ancient dwellers. The wind came from the south, skirting the peaks of El Alto, at whose feet the summits which had managed to advance from the further side, the Rumi ridge, grew less arrogant. Between the ruins and the lake spread a broad meadow of tall grass with patches of rushes here and there. In the summer it was dry, but during the winter it became flooded because the swollen waters of the lake could not all drain away through its outlet, and they overflowed into the meadow, making it unfit for cultivation.

At one time a mayor with progressive ideas had wanted to deepen the drainage ditch, but people began to say that the spirit of the lake, in the form of a black, hairy woman, wearing a wreath of rushes in her hair, had appeared to oppose the attempt. The lake of Yananahui was enchanted. It was also said that a duck of gold, followed by many ducklings of the same metal, appeared occasionally on the banks to tempt passers-by. Then she and her brood would plunge back into the water and swim about just out of reach, so that the covetous ones would come in and be drowned. The lake talked, too, in a kind of bellow.

In the ruined village there were harmful airs, too, and it was the haunt of souls of the departed and of the notorious Chacho—an evil spirit who lives among the stones of the ruins and is little and black, with a face like dried-up straw. He sucks out the warmth of the body and fills it with the cold from the stones, which produces a swelling that is

almost always fatal.

These ruins probably dated from the Royal Edict of 1551 which obliged the Indians who were living in the barren highlands to leave them and come down to the valleys and lowlands, where they would be within easier reach of those who had received grants from the crown, the encomenderos. The way of life of these men of the uplands was conditioned by the cultivation of the potato and the quinua pigweed and by the presence of the llama and the vicuña—animals of the uplands—which gave them wool and meat as well as their services as beasts of burden. Naturally, during the time of the Incas there were Indians living in the temperate and torrid zones. The cultivation of corn, the principal crop, which does not do well on the cool highlands, and of coca, which requires a tropical climate, proves their former presence there.

So it may well be that the village of Rumi had had as its ancestor the settlement of Yananahui; though, on the other hand, it might be that the villagers had always been in Rumi and the dwellers of the highlands had been obliged to go elsewhere. This hypothesis seems the most likely, for, if they had been enslaved, the people of the village would not have been able to maintain their existence as a community.

In any case they were confronted with a new situation. The incorporation into the life of the Indian of wheat and of the horse, of the cow, and of the ass has made those of the north of Peru—where there is a greater variety of climate—prefer to live in a temperate climate, though they do go into the uplands to plant potatoes. Neither the wheat nor the corn could stand the frosts of the highlands, and the cows and donkeys were stunted because of the severity of the climate and the scant nourishment to be derived from the ichu grass. So the villagers of Rumi were migrating to a region that was adverse and that was fraught with ancestral mysteries.

They installed themselves on the slopes of Rumi, turning the cattle out on the plains. Nasha Suro, having no fear of Chacho and most probably in league with him, settled in one of the less tumbled-down houses of the abandoned village.

Nasha's position was now one of frank disrepute. The villagers had received practical proof of the uselessness of her spells. No, she wasn't anything like as good as they had thought. Herbs for this or that ailment, anybody can do that. The important thing would have been to get rid of that devilish Don Alvaro. It had been useless for Nasha to

shut herself up in her lair in the village to keep up the air of mystery even after her failure. It had been useless for her to prophesy blood and be right about it. Their misfortune, symbolized by the rancher, was greater than all this. And Nasha had been unable to do anything about him. There she was, amid the ruins of the stones and her reputation. There were some who still hoped she might do something worthwhile with the help of Chacho, but even so she did not receive the attention befitting her standing. In former times the first house roofed over by the villagers was hers. Now house after house was going up and her dwelling was still open to the inclemency of the weather and, which was worse, without the privacy demanded by her secret rites. A mysterious bundle, which she herself had carried up, lay waiting for better times in a moldy, exposed corner.

New little houses of thatch and stone began to balance themselves on the slopes of Rumi. Although there was abundant stone and straw, wood for the rafters of the roof was very scarce, and they had to bring it on their backs; for the ox teams could not cross the rough terrain from the places in the Rumi Gorge and other deep and distant ravines where paucos and alders grew. The men looked like ants carrying their booty of forked poles, rooftrees, and beams over the steep rocks. There would come a time when they would be able to build better houses. But it was necessary to build them any way now because winter was almost upon them. The days went by. The first rains began to fall.

And the Indian, simple and stubborn, overcame the resistance of his surroundings, and, amidst the high grass and the rocks, beneath the unfaltering lash of the wind, the houses began to spring up, preserving their rounded walls and sharp roofs with a vigorous, defiant air.

The villagers then began to plow up the best pieces of land which were selected by Clemente Yacu in the less stony places. Notwithstanding, the plows made a great noise as they broke the gravely furrows, and those that had been sharpened by Evaristo or Don Jacinto Prieto—he was known to be still in jail—soon became dull. But they would manage to get in a patch of potatoes, and in time, it would spread its gay mantle of green over the slope that lay below the houses. They would plant quinua in another place, over that way, where the earth, for a considerable space, triumphed over the rocks. It would be fine to see the deep purple of the quinua fields waving in the breeze. And they would also plant barley, ocas, and even ollucos and mashuas. Everything that could be raised on the uplands. They had some seed potatoes, for they had raised them on the slopes that lay above the wheat fields. Groups of villagers went to

buy seed for the other crops from different places in the region. They plowed and got ready to sow. Life was beginning once more.

Yanañahui and its surroundings was a land of fog and wind. The fog rose from the lake and the Ocos River every morning, so heavy, so damp that it dragged itself all along the plain and the hillsides until it finally cleared. It disappeared completely when the wind sprang up, a stiff, whistling wind that only died down after midnight or just before dawn. It seemed to have an understanding with the fog, or at least to favor it; but at times, probably because it was in a bad humor, it invaded its domain very early. Then it broke up the fog against the rocks, tore it to shreds with furious slashes and swept it out of all nooks and crannies up to the clouds above. The mist fled along the sky like a wild flock of sheep, but afterward it picked up courage, and gathered itself together, threatening a storm.

Rosendo was thinking this to himself one morning, as he ate his soup and his meat beside the rough wall of his new dwelling. What is more, he had become aware again of the dog Candelá, his little grandson, and Anselmo, whose existence he had completely forgotten of late. Well! After so long a time a feeling of happiness had sprung up in his heart with the sprightly vigor of a plant when first it sprouts through the ground. And he was looking at the sown fields too. The plants were already showing through the stony black earth and were preparing to live, imitating the tenacity of their cultivators. A barn lot for sheep and another for cows was growing too, its walls propped up by vertical rocks.

There was a lot to do. The herders and especially Inocencio had hard work to keep the cows and horses from going back to the fields they were accustomed to. It meant watching them and keeping them from running away until they got used to the cold climate and the new grasses. The villagers knew that the overseer Ramon Briceno was living in the village to keep all stock that did not belong to Umay out of the pastures.

The moon turned white and round, and one night the sky was clear of clouds and the light descended, filling all the horizons. Rosendo had

been waiting for an occasion like this to climb up to the summit of Father Rumi, make an offering to him, question the coca in the seclusion of the catipa, and ask the hill itself about their fate.

So he started to climb, carrying on his shoulder a knapsack full of coca, loaves of dark bread, and a gourdful of chicha that had been saved since harvesttime. Of late Rosendo had enjoyed anew the respect and the affection of the community. His prudence and his decisions were appraised at their true value. The sad fate of Mardoqueo and El Manco, slain by the bullets of so powerful a weapon, had silenced the reproaches of even the most bellicose. These two were the last dead the community buried in the old cemetery.

Rosendo laboriously made his way up the mountain. He felt very old, for he had never grown so tired before. He stopped at the foot of the conical peak of rock to rest and then began climbing again. And as he ascended, hills emerged from all sides and the wind became stronger and he had to dig his hands and feet into the cracks not to fall. In this way he reached a great height, beside a seamed opening, or rather crack, where he stopped. The bluish rock rose further still. Rosendo looked around. In the distance, beneath the moon, stood his old acquaintances. Hoary, wise Urpillau; Huillac with his Indian profile; crouching Puma, who could never make up his mind to spring on slow, plump, sedentary Suni; Huarca of warlike habits; pastoral Mamay, now pale with stubble fields. And others nearer and others farther off, a shapeless crowd that seemed to hearken to the teachers. Because, in the moonlight, the great hills held a solemn council, masters that they were of the secrets of life. From this side, Rumi spoke his imperious truth of rock, becoming as a lance, aiming at the sky. And through the sky, that night, the moon advanced slowly in all its fullness and the bright stars gleamed.

Rosendo felt great and small, great in a cosmic sense, and small as a pebble, as he knelt before the rock and offered through the crack to the spirit of Father Rumi the loaves of dark bread, coca, and a little of the chicha that he poured out of the gourd. Then he squatted down, drank some of the chicha himself, and prepared a great wad of coca to help him inquire into the future. The wind was dying down and a firm, pure silence that seemed as tangible as the rock came over the air. The great hills meditated and spoke, while below lay the world, small and confused. The yellowing stubble that surrounded the village on one side, the glittering sheet of Yanañahui on the other. Was that far-off conglomeration the District of Muncha? Were those spots the harvested plots of Rumi? The dark fissures of the brooks and gorges could be distinguished, carrying along the purling gift of water that

the hills poured down from the clouds. The prophesy was not very good.

To free the coca, Rosendo put into the ball some lime which he dipped out of a little gourd with a damp wire. The coca still tasted bitter, or, rather, insipid. It did not have the bitterness of negation, but neither was it sweet.

"Coca, coca, shall I ask?"

And the coca remained mute however much Rosendo moistened it with saliva or turned the ball about knowingly with his tongue. But finally the old man's face grew pleasantly numb, and through his whole body he felt a gentle, delicate delight. The coca became sweet upon his tongue and in his mouth. Rosendo understood. The coca had answered sweetly and he could question it. He stood up and gazed at the distant hills which seemed larger than ever to him, and then at the towering peak of Rumi. In a powerful voice he cried:

"Father Rumi, Father Rumi, will things go well with us in Yanañahui?"

The silence returned a wave of multiplied echoes. Rosendo could not understand them well and he called out again:

"Answer, Father Rumi, I have made you offerings of bread, coca, and chicha."

The echoes replied once more in a confused murmur. It was taking a long time for the answer which, to be propitious, should have come at once.

"Answer, Father Rumi, will things go well with us?"

Was it because he did not want to answer? Or had evil spirits from the crags that looked over Muncha interfered? The immensity of the whole night seemed to say no.

"Will things go well with us?" he persisted.

The echoes reverberated as though mocking him and the great stone silence spread out. Rosendo was frightened and sorrowful and he asked for the last time in a quavering accent:

"Answer, Father Rumi, yes or no?"

The echoes skipped here and there and a little wind blew a heartening

word through the openings of the rocks:

"Well."

Rosendo grew hopeful.

"Well?" he almost shouted.

And the word seemed to fall from the lips of the spirit of Father Rumi:

"Well."

Rosendo was sure it was not an echo. The hill itself, the father, had spoken. He descended after pouring through the crack the coca and chicha he still had left. The way down seemed very short, and when he reached the new village it was to him as though he had been living there for a long time. Before he entered his stone house he looked once more at Rumi. The wise peak went on with its cosmic conversation. Father Rumi!

Rosendo, the selectmen, and the villagers were weary of court trials. They had seen that it was impossible to accomplish anything. Now all they wanted was to be left in peace. But Fiero had spoken of the possibility of appealing, and the matter was taken up at a council meeting. Duty came before weariness. Besides they had to make some sort of a stand, even if it was with the help of the law, or Don Amenabar would finally make slaves of them.

By great good luck they met a young lawyer in town who was a member of the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Indian. His name was Arturo Correa Zavala—so read the metal plate in the window of his office which was the novelty of the town. He had just graduated and he was full of ideas of justice and lofty ideals. He was a native of the locality and he had come back with an altruistic purpose. His father, a storekeeper, had died leaving him a small inheritance which he used to finish his studies. Now, unfettered by any local obligations and with his professional degree and his preparation, he could earn his living and face such situations as might arise with dignity and hope of success. The law was obliged to protect everybody, beginning with the Indians. At least, that was what he thought.

He received Rosendo and the selectmen amiably, and talked to them simply and enthusiastically about the work of the Association; he listened very carefully to all they told him and he offered to take their case, and he made certain suggestions. Finally, to the surprise of the Indians, he did not charge them anything. They came back very much impressed and even somewhat hopeful in view of the assurance and ability of the young lawyer. Rosendo recalled the favorable augury and the voice of Rumi. The spirit of the hill had turned propitious as on other now remote occasions. The lawyer had said:

"We will appeal to a higher court, and if that does not favor us, we will take it to the Supreme Court."

So that was good. When the judge advised Don Alvaro Amenabar of the lawyer's plans, the latter answered, rubbing his hands:

"I don't know if an appeal after all that has happened is legal, but you admit it, and let it takes its course, and just let me know when they send the brief. Bring on your redeemers! The Indians don't know who I am, and that youngster, Correa Zavala, looks to me like the kind that drowns in shallow water. You just watch. Trying to kill me with a boulder! Did you ever hear of such a crime against respectable people? It isn't so much the death of Iniguez, though I lost a good head there, as the idea of the thing that makes me wild. You see that you let me know in time."

Some time later an Indian postman left the town driving ahead of him a donkey carrying the sealed and stamped bag of mail. In the pouch was a lengthy brief addressed to the Supreme Court of Justice.

Life had become very different. Not only because the houses were smaller and the crops different. Nor because nobody came to visit the community except Fiero Vasquez, who appeared twice to talk with Doroteo on the shore of the lake. Nor because the surroundings looked different. All the details of their existence had changed. The only bird to be heard in the morning was the gray-hued giicho, which greeted the day from the roofs of the houses or the lofty rocks with a long, sweet song. There were no zorzales, nor huanchachos, nor rocoteros. The sparrows seemed dispirited. On the plains the brown liclics flew about uttering the cry from which they derived their name. The beautiful coriquinga, black and white, with a red bill, screeched as it busily and expertly turned over the dried patches of cow dung looking

for the worms that breed under it. The ducks in the rushes by the side of the lake were seldom seen. The livestock lowed, neighed, and bleated uneasily. The sheep were frightened by the frequent passing of the condors. In the hard black ground of the fields the crops grew slowly. All life seemed tortured by the severity of the rocks, the heavy mist, the piercing cold, the sun, so grudging of its warmth, and the unceasing wind. The men, protected by their ponchos, huddled up to wait for something vague and distant. Only once in a great while was the flute of Demetrio Sumallacta heard and an occasional reed pipe. And one night there came the sound of a quena. Homesickness found voice in music—a long-drawn, heart-rending melody. Then they all understood how much life had really changed.

It rained in the afternoons. At times the showers were very heavy and beat against the houses furiously. Other times they were so slight that the water barely dripped from the roof. It was the middle of November and there had not yet been a heavy storm. The sky was overcast with dark clouds one afternoon when Clemente Yacu went to the door of his hut and began to call to the shepherds who were watching the sheep. They had no more than begun to drive them in hurriedly when the sky blazed with a bluish flame that flashed across from El Alto to the summit of Rumi. A terrific clap of thunder reverberated between the hard sky and the rough earth as though on a sounding board, and the wind howled, beating the rocks and disheveling the fields of grass. The flock bleated as it approached the fold, the milch cows and their calves ran toward the barn lot, and the rest of the livestock galloped through the meadows toward the hillsides, instinctively seeking the shelter of the rocks. Once more the thunder and lightning raged, and in a few minutes the meadows were empty, the sheep had huddled up in one corner of the fold, and the villagers stood looking out of the door of their cabins, invoking the protection of Saint Isidore and, above all, of Saint Barbara, an expert in matters of thunder and lightning. The flashes followed one another, cutting through the air like arrows, like flames, like fluttering threads, like whips, and even in conventional, though infrequent zigzags, to bury themselves in the piled-up rocks toward Muncha, on the crags of El Alto, and on the summit and lower peaks of Rumi. At times they passed over the sides of the hills. At times they struck the plain, sometimes cleaving it like a sword, sometimes rolling along like a ball of fire. The peals of thunder shook the hills so that they seemed about to fall down on the little huts, inside which the Indians were purposely keeping very quiet in the belief that talking, and especially

shouting, attracts lightning. The little ones cried in spite of everything. Then came the rattle of hail, bouncing off the rocks to pile up in the hollows.

Finally, with the all-enveloping darkness of the night, the rain began to fall in thick noisy torrents, whipped about by the hurricane that flailed it against the walls and tore at the roofs, trying to get through. The torrents of water splashed upon the ponds, the damp air filled the houses, and the people were made aware of the storm through all their senses projected into every sphere of their surroundings. The darkness did not prevent them from knowing that the plains were flooded, that torrents were sweeping down the hillsides, imperiling the crops, and that their livestock was suffering under the lee of the rocks, longing as never before for the old stamping grounds. The lightning kept shooting its magnificent, tragic arrows, and the thunder seemed to hammer at the hills to break them to pieces. Beyond doubt a rock or many rocks were falling, sending down an avalanche of stones and mud. But the peals of thunder made it impossible to distinguish the sounds clearly, and now the downpour of rain filled the ears. Supper was eaten by the light of the lightning and the fireplace.

Hours went by and there was no sign of the storm letting up. To be sure the lightning and thunder had diminished a little, but the rain kept splashing into the mud and the pools. The coca helped a little against the cold, but afterward sleep would not come. It was hard to sleep under the impact of the rain and the wind, with the roofs shaking and some of the houses beginning to leak, and outside the earth and the animals suffering and tormented by the storm. Those who did manage to sleep that night did it, as the saying goes, with only one eye.

The dawn came late when the wind was shaking out its last banners of tremulous water. The mist was beginning to lift, and a determined sun was trying to shine through it. The sky had been clear, but it was beginning to cloud over again. From the roofs and the hillsides the water kept draining down. The plains were certainly flooded and the stock nowhere to be seen. Some of the villagers came out of their houses, with their pants rolled up to their knees, the better to see the effects of the storm. There had been a landslide which had torn down the stone wall of the sheepfold and had killed several sheep. A stream that had been born overnight divided the quinua field in two. The other fields that had been sowed had not suffered very much. Some of the potato plants had been broken off by the hail. The broken roofs were few and could soon be repaired.

Ah, Saint Isidore!

They went to his chapel, which was hardly more than a big niche of stone and thatch, built a little higher up the slope so that it could look down upon the row of houses. This preeminence had been a mistake. The chapel had been at the mercy of the wind, and the roof had been torn off in places. The rain had come through and the paint had run, leaving streaks of black, red, and white on that venerable countenance.

The news of the damage and destruction spread through the village, and the people ate their breakfast uneasily, anxious to go after the horses, the donkeys, and the cows. The milch cows were in the barnyard, but no others were in sight. As they went through the plains of Yananahui the water came halfway up the legs of the searchers. It was still deeper in the hollows where the rushes grew in the meadow. Many of the animals were missing. Especially cows and horses, for there were only a few tame donkeys, as they had had no time to round up the wild ones which had run away to the Oeros River, and which they had given up as lost. The search party drove the stock into the meadow, but as they were unaccustomed to water they did not want to come in. Many animals came back from the slopes and sheltered spots of El Alto and Rumi. Some they found on their way back to their old haunts. The ones that were missing were probably there already. One of the villagers found a cow lamed and an ass dead. The cow had probably slipped and fallen, and the ass might have died of the cold.

Another villager found Frontino dead. He had been struck by lightning. Rosendo himself went to see his beloved horse. His roan coat made him look like a stain of blood against the grass that had been flattened down by the wind and the rain. A few feet from the horse was the hole the lightning had torn in the earth. Rosendo felt very badly. This horse was the best of all, large, gentle, and strong. He had good blood in him, for Benito Castro, when nothing but a young lad, had bred his mare Paloma to the stallion Pensamiento, which belonged to a distant ranch. That was another of Benito's exploits. The owner of Pensamiento had stubbornly refused to let his horse service any mares except his own, even for money. His horses were a matter of pride to him. So Benito hung around the ranch for many days to make friends with the dogs. When they knew him he brought his mare over near the stable. The stallion got scent of her, gave aloud neigh, and in a few minutes had jumped the fence with that agility which characterizes fugitives and lovers. In due time Paloma foaled a fine, sleek colt that was a pleasure to see. The pet of all the villagers he galloped everywhere with that happy activity of childhood. He grew

up and was broken. A band of gypsies once came through the village. Some had dancing bears; others were horse traders. Frontino disappeared two days after the gypsies had been there. Probably one of them came back to steal him. The villagers went after the gypsies but they could not find Frontino. Some time afterward one of them, who had gone to Celendin to buy straw hats, came across him and ransomed him after many difficulties. His owner, who had bought him from the gypsies, did not think so much of him. He had even gelded him, for he already owned a good sire.

Frontino spent the rest of his life with the community, a hard-working, noble member of it, his only mishap being that goring by the bull Choloque. Rosendo had made a hundred trips on his back. Frontino's life, because of his loyal service, was part of that of all of them. Now his time to die had come. And he had undoubtedly died because he was of superior breed. Commoner horses have a quicker instinct, and know how to hide in storms. The higher-bred ones cannot keep quiet, and they go nervously from one shelter in search of another. That was probably what Frontino was doing when the lightning hit or rather grazed him. Though the truth of the matter is that he was killed by the same fatality that had struck all of them. And to old Rosendo, just as when the ox Mosco had died, it seemed that a good member of the community had been lost. But there was no time left even for sorrows, for they all had to look for and find the strayed animals.

The next day a stranger came to the village. He was a messenger sent by Correa Zavala. He came to tell them that the postman who was carrying the mail had been held up on the lonely highlands of Huarca by a group of highwaymen. In the mail pouch was the brief of the appeal of the suit over boundary limits that was being laid before the Supreme Court. A man, all dressed in black and riding a black horse, had watched the holdup from a spot a mile or so away. Public opinion accused Fiero Vasquez of being this man.

Rosendo, in spite of his weariness, would have liked to rush to town. But he had nothing to ride. Frontino lay in a ring of vultures. The other horses were being used by Artidoro Oteiza and the herders, who had not yet come in from their search for the missing livestock. Would Fiero be capable of doing such a thing? Could he be betraying the community? Rosendo trembled with doubt and helplessness. Now what would happen? What could they do? In Umay, the rancher

Alvaro Amenabar y Roldan, in the secrecy of a locked room, as he set fire to the bulky brief, said to his wife:

"Leonor, this is the price of a rolling stone. I could go through with it again, but there might be a scandal and I have to think about my candidacy and Oscar's. Besides, I'm busy with the Ocos matter just now."

"But, Alvaro, when will all this be over? You see how that herder you thought might be a spy disappeared right from under your nose. Fiero Vasquez—"

"Don't you worry. This is a blow at Fiero too. You'll see how they send out the militia. Now I've got to write what I want my friend, the editor of La Patria, to say about it."

Don Alvaro smiled, his white face ruddy with the heat of the flames, as the stamped paper disappeared slowly and surely, leaving floating shreds of gray ash.

Artidoro Oteiza and four herders followed the trail of the lost cows and horses. They went toward the deserted village, thinking they might find them there. They followed the tracks down the lonely main street, past the house doors closed like silent mouths, and toward the pastures. Not a horse or cow belonging to the community was to be seen among the many head of Umay stock that were quite at home there. Little by little the tracks converged and some were those of horses. One of the herders, who was an expert tracker, said they were mounted horses. There were also prints of a pedestrian wearing sandals among the varied tracks. Finally all the tracks came together on the path that went along Lombriz Creek toward the Ocos River. Now there was no doubt: the community stock had been rounded up and driven over there. At the Ocos River the tracks continued along the bank, upstream, into the lands of Umay. Oteiza and his men followed them, in spite of everything. But they could not follow them far. The overseer, Ramon Briceno, and three others, carrying guns, came forward to meet them.

"Stop. Who are you?"

"We are from the community of Rumi and we are tracking our stock that has got loose."

"A likely story! You're the thieves who have been stealing cattle and horses lately."

"But the tracks lead right up here," argued Oteiza. "They got away from Yananahui this morning."

"What tracks, you thieves? Get out of here before we put a bullet through you."

"Thieves? Just let us follow these tracks along here and you'll see if they don't lead to our stock."

"All right, go ahead," said Ramon Briceno.

They rode along a couple of miles and the tracks began to lead out from the path into a pasture.

"Now, friends, keep right on the road," said Ramon. "Keep right on to Umay, right up to the ranch house."

"What?"

"You're under arrest for stealing."

The overseers leveled their rifles at them. At a sign from Oteiza the villagers dashed off as fast as their horses could gallop. A few bullets whistled past them. It was apparent that the overseers were not shooting to kill, but just to frighten them and make them stop. But then a horse dropped. And another. The villagers who were riding them were taken prisoner. Then Oteiza and the man who followed him had to turn back.

"Come along, on your way to Umay—"

"At least let us take the saddles off the dead horses."

"Get along, we said."

Don Alvaro Amenabar held them prisoners in the jail at the ranch for three days. When he let them go he said to Oteiza:

"You are one of the selectmen, aren't you? All right, I haven't killed you because I intend to get some of the laziness out of your bones. You ought to go to work in a mine I'm working on the other side of the Ocos River. Tell that to that scoundrel Rosendo. I am willing to forgive his crimes and to treat him as a friend, in spite of the fact that he tried to have me killed with a rolling stone. Otherwise he and all of

you are going to regret it. Here, to show you that I don't want this to go any further, I am going to return your two horses which I ought to keep to pay for all you have stolen from me. Get out."

Now what would happen? What could be done? Rosendo and the selectmen could not answer these questions, even to one another. Correa Zavala had told them that the theft of the brief was a serious matter, for the proof of the very existence of the community had disappeared. Would they have to give in to Amenabar and die smothered in the shadows and fatigue of the dark mine pits? A painful sense of resignation seemed to settle over them, darkening every horizon. What could they do?

Doroteo Quispe, Jeronimo Cahua, and Eloy Condorumi disappeared one night between sundown and sunup. They had made up their minds to do something on their own responsibility. Hardly any of the villagers knew why they had left. Perhaps Rosendo had sent them somewhere. But he insisted that he had not. Paula came to talk with him.

"Father, they went to join Fiero Vasquez. What do you say?"

And Mayor Rosendo Maqui, for the first time in his life, was unable to answer a villager's question.

In the early morning it was so cold that the dew froze, blighting the plants. The potato patch was almost wiped out. It was going to be a bad year. Winter was at hand in all its fury, and the plains were always flooded. All the asses died and the cows and horses kept stubbornly trying to go back to their old pastures. They had to graze them on the slopes of the hills and shut them up at night in a pen they had built for this purpose. Life was very hard. The sun barely shone. The houses were shrouded in mist or trembled at the blast of the storm. The villagers who left their shelter to do their tasks lived in damp clothes. Their dark flesh acquired the indifferent chill of stone. Their souls were growing insensible too. Even those who stayed indoors, the very children, adopted the attitude of rocks as time went on. This was a world of stone in which one could survive only by

becoming stone.

Anselmo, the harp player, was frail, these days. Once it could have been said that he and his instrument formed a musical unit through which the community life expressed its secret longings. With the help of the row of tightly strung strings and the triangular sounding board he intoned a hymn of furrows, of cornfields drunk with their greenness, and of golden wheat fields, of spaces devised from the peaks of lofty rock summits, of festivals of love, of tasks become festivals, of manifold rhythms and hopes.

Anselmo, as a child, had hoped to embrace life and had ended embracing the harp. During his childhood, like almost all the children of the Andes, he had been a shepherd. With him, while he tended the flocks, went Rosacha, and the two used to watch the Indians plowing in the distance. Anselmo's father was a maker of cheese on one of the ranches, but Anselmo did not want to do that. He wanted to be a sower. Near the gray fields the cabins sent up their pinnacles of smoke. Rosacha was little, too, but she had the precocity for life that country girls had. In her eyes shone an irresistible call to motherhood. The cabin, the furrow, the child were her hope for the morrow.

One day Anselmo spoke:

"I will learn to plow and we'll have our house."

With this he had said everything that was necessary. But they never had a house nor did he plow. He could not even do what the weak and sickly do—walk behind the plow dropping the seed. His hands were denied the gift of the plow and the seed. And this, for a man of the earth, is the negation of life itself.

It happened that one unhappy day Anselmo took sick. For a long time he lay in the gloom of his cabin, under a pile of blankets, racked with pain. His mother prepared drinks for him from every kind of curative herb. A healer was brought in from far away. He did not die, but when they were finally able to take him out in the sun his limbs were lifeless and twisted like the roots of old trees. He was paralyzed.

And before his eyes lay the earth, the ox teams, the planted fields, and the roads. Down the gray path that wound through the pasture went Rosacha every day behind the flocks. Sometimes she called out to him

as before:

"Anselmoooo!"

Her voice was answered by the hills, but Anselmo remained silent. Seated before his cabin, looking like a bundle of stripes in his Indian poncho, he watched Rosacha from his helpless repose. Sometimes he waved his arms about, as when his adoptive mother Pascuala departed forever, but they became entangled in his poncho as in a mass of foliage, and he felt that he was like a plant attached to the earth. But within him, his heart beat in time to old memories and hopes.

A main highway branched off near his cabin. Down it came groups of Indians playing rustic flutes. And at the time of the feast of Rumi the music of harps and violins went along the road, until it disappeared in the distance. Anselmo spent many hours listening to the melodies of the pilgrims which were at once joyous and sorrowful. His face was turned to the wind, which was charged with music, his eyes almost shut, and his hands tightly clenched and wet with sweat. He would have liked to take hold and keep with him forever this miracle of sounds, to fall asleep with them and dream. But the music died away in the distance and again he was alone. But a new emotion had sprung up in his breast, life had revealed to him something that had been hidden before, and behold, there was music in everything. The earth exhaled the joyous sound of the song of birds in the dawn. The rushing torrent of his feelings expressed itself in one simple request:

"Father, I want a harp."

With this, as when he spoke to Rosacha, he had said all that needed to be said. The cheese maker, after thinking it over a little, as is natural in a cheese maker when he is about to spend twenty soles, answered:

"All right."

At a fair he bought him a harp. Like all those of native fabrication, it had no pedals. The Indian has given this foreign instrument his own rural simplicity, his morning tenderness, his profound affliction, all his state of a captive bird, and has made it his own.

The fingers of Anselmo's dark hands curved over the strings, and, little by little, the music of a life—that could not be his and was that of all —welled up from his emotion and from this three-cornered, enchanted box that trembled like a great heart. Sitting on a rude stool his father had built for him the dark youth, almost a child, with his sad pale face, would draw up his feet under his poncho and stretch out his

arms toward the well-tempered triangle of arpeggios. And playing, playing, there were no faltering steps. The earth was beautiful and broad and fruitful.

Time went by and Rosacha grew in years and Anselmo in his reputation as a harpist. She no longer went with the flocks. And he went to all the fairs and celebrations of harvests and marriages. The villagers took him wherever he wanted to go, on a donkey, as though they were carrying joy with them. The heart of each and all was in his music.

"Is the wedding going to be good?"

"Of course, Anselmo is going to play."

And people gathered to dance or simply to delight their ears with the unending stream of trills. When had any other harpist in the neighborhood been blessed with such hands? Nobody could remember.

The time came for Rosacha's marriage and Anselmo took part in the festivities almost without recalling . . . Many years had slipped by and his music filled his life. The radiant couple, on their way back from the church, followed by the priest and the guests, came toward him, where he waited at the house with those who had not gone to the church. Rosacha passed by and it seemed to him as though she were covered with the dawn. For a moment his remote hopes surged up. But all that was over forever. Faces became flushed with chicha and Anselmo was asked to play. The couples lined up and he began the quick notes of a huaino. There was Rosacha dancing with her husband, gaily swinging her body with its broad hips and full breasts. The harpist, who used to give himself up completely to his instrument, now watched the dancers. He watched Rosacha. She had grown and was dancing with another man who was her husband. From that moment, Anselmo realized clearly what was to be his destiny.

When he was left an orphan, Pascuala and Rosendo took him into their home and he was like another son. Unlike Benito Castro, he was handicapped by his physical weakness and his delicate health; but he possessed the supreme gift of music, the favorite art of the man of the Andes. In the community Anselmo intoned with all the joys of rural life. He, too, bore with the others the sufferings of the migration. Nevertheless, in those days nobody thought much about him. As though his weakness were a defect which put him out of consideration, even Rosendo did not take him into account. Once

more Anselmo was alone, and his harp, still mute with grief for Pascuala—how often the cripple thought of his mother at this time—could not comfort him. From his corner in the porch of Rosendo's house he had witnessed the assembly, sorrowfully looking at the backs of the villagers, or at an angry face, and had heard the sad words that were spoken that day. He, too, was an outsider, but they did not think of him that way. When the time came to depart they put him on a donkey, with his harp in his hands, and he was among the first to leave. He spent three very sad nights in Yananahui with the few who stayed there to watch their belongings. Afterward, he felt in the way during those days of feverish activity while the houses were being built.

When Rosendo cheered up a little and began to come back to life again, Anselmo believed that life would begin once more as before. His dream was short. Misfortune came back more relentless than ever, the crops were damaged, the cattle began to disappear and die, many villagers left, and over those who remained hung the threat of inhuman labor, slavery. The fog, the rain, the cold, the despair ate into the bones. One had to be of rock to survive. Anselmo was fragile.

One afternoon he wanted to play and he stretched up and clasped his harp. Old Rosendo, Juanacha, and Sebastian were eagerly waiting for the music. Even the dog Candela, his coat matted and damp, pricked up his ears. Where was the land of which to sing? There was only stone, cold, and silence. He wanted to cry and could not. He was not strong enough to endure the storm of weeping. Perhaps the notes would not come with the limpidness he wanted, perhaps his fingers could not find the right place. Anselmo's angular, dark face said nothing, but something snapped in his breast as violently as a harp string sometimes snaps. He fell face downward, and as he fell his paralyzed legs rubbed across the strings, which uttered a shrill, bitter lament.

So died the harpist Anselmo in Yananahui.

No smoke came from the dwelling of Nasha Suro.

"What is Chacho going to do to me?" said the mayor. "Life isn't worth living."

And he went to see her.

The stone house which now had a roof—Nasha had conjured the evil spirits not to harm the roofers—stood by itself. In one corner the hearth was full of dead ashes, and all the embers were out. Nothing had been done to keep the fire alive. There was nothing to be seen anywhere. Nasha had gone. Nobody knew when or where.

"There they go," said Doroteo.

Jeronimo and Condorumi looked at the network of roads that spread over the mountain range of Huarca. Goings and comings had worn dark paths which crisscrossed the grayish fields. Two riders were coming along preceded by a man on foot who was leading a pack mule. The watchers descended from the peak where they were standing, and, mounting their horses which they had left in a hollow, started in the direction of the paths. It had not been easy for them to come by their horses. They were swift and strong and belonged to Umay. It was the first commission Fiero Vasquez had given them. They had to appear suddenly on the grazing lands of the ranch, rope the horses, and gallop off to the mountain heights bareback. A group of herders went after them and picked up their trail where they had turned south. When they were closing in on them Doroteo and his men opened fire, and the herders turned back thinking that these were not the cowardly Indians of the community. The horses turned out to be spirited and strong, and they gave Condorumi the most unbroken of them to ride. Not because he was a better horseman but because his weight tamed down the wildest. Through the easy holdup of several tax collectors they had come by saddles. Now, after obtaining certain information, they knew who the travelers were and they set out after them.

It was about the middle of the afternoon of a day in December. It had been threatening rain for a week. Melba Cortez and Bismarck Ruiz took advantage of the moment to begin their trip, before the heavy storms of January and February should throw a barrier between her health and the coast. A drenching would have been fatal to her. But Melba herself was afraid to start before. She was worried at what Bismarck Ruiz had told her of the incident at Rumi, when he had been in mortal danger of being crushed by the stone or slashed by the machete of El Manco and other bandits. It all had frightened her very

much. Afterward he regretted that his vanity had led him on to try to appear a hero, but it was too late. Melba saw falling rocks and machetes on every hand.

"But, baby, they don't even suspect that I—"

"Maybe, but what about Fiero Vasquez?"

When the Indians went to see Correa Zavala her fears grew.

"You see, Bismarck, you see? They suspect you. Who knows but what they blame me too. Oh, you can't trust those beasts."

But time went by and the Indians gave no further sign of hostility. Bismarck told her that, beyond doubt, the holdup and stealing of the brief was the work of Fiero. Melba quieted down, and rather than lose the longed-for trip, which they would if they did not take advantage of the lull in December, they left.

They had been riding since daybreak. The wind was strong and Melba pulled a thick sweater around her chest. Nevertheless, the cold air made her cough. They rode slowly, for a quick trot made her cough worse. The mule driver, even though on foot, kept far ahead of them, and Bismarck shouted to him:

"You wait for us at the inn."

"All right, sir."

A moment later the mule driver was out of sight around a hill. Melba, who was riding ahead, had before her the grim solitude of the highlands as her only view. The hills had always troubled her, those steep heights, dramatically dark, which seemed to cut off and enclose a human being to isolate him from the rest of the world and kill him of sadness. She had been born within sight of a sea of gentle waves, with soft, shifting sand dunes. The hills were far away, and she had never noticed their aridity; and now she shuddered before these contorted, threatening rocks, chilled with a thousand rains and winds, where there was no shelter to afford her a little comfort. Bismarck rode behind her and noticed her depression.

"What's the matter, Melbita?"

"What would be the matter! I hate these hills, this loneliness, this bleakness. What will we do if my cough. . . ."

She coughed noisily and then she took out a little handkerchief to dry her unhappy tears.

"We'll soon be at the inn. Of course it isn't a hotel. But you can rest there."

"You think I don't remember it? A stone shed, without even a door, and a leaky thatch roof. Is that a fit place for human beings?"

The tears turned into a flood of weeping.

"There, there, Melbita."

Bismarck was used to these attacks of depression which would pass after an hour or two. There was nothing to be upset about. Meanwhile Doroteo Quispe and his men were approaching, slowly, too, and watching carefully.

"Shall we attack now?" Jeronimo's question was more in the nature of a suggestion.

"Hm," growled Doroteo, "it will be better to wait until it gets dark. It looks as though there were people watching from the hills."

Melba was getting tired. She had thought she was very well, and now, at the first real exertion, her strength was flagging. Her back hurt and her cough was getting worse.

"Couldn't we rest a little while, Bismarck?"

The lawyer helped her off the horse and spread his poncho on the ground. Melba lay down on her back. She was very pretty in her dark-blue riding habit, which made her hands and face, reddened a little by the highland cold, seem whiter than ever.

"Do you think it's going to rain, Bismarck? It looks awfully cloudy. What will we do if it rains?"

"We'll get wet, my dear," said Bismarck, trying to laugh it off.

"You see how mean you are. Do you want me to die? Why am I so unfortunate?"

Her tears increased. The man sat down beside her and tried to quiet her. Then he lit a cigarette.

"Why are you smoking? You know if I see you then I want to, and I

can't smoke with this cough . . . How wretched I am."

Bismarck threw away the cigarette. When Melba got up, after resting a long time; she had stopped crying, but she said she felt wearier than before. However, there was nothing for it but to start riding again if they wanted to reach the inn. A winter twilight, ugly and lowering, was spreading over the sky.

Melba turned around to ask:

"Do you think we'll make it?"

She cut short her question with a cry of fright. Then she said, although Bismarck was already looking back:

"Look, look, who are those? They have rifles. . . ."

They had not noticed their pursuers until then. They were far away, but it could be seen that they were carrying rifles.

"They must be overseers," said Bismarck, encouraging her and himself.

And that was what he really came to believe. The armed men turned off the road and disappeared behind the slope of a hill. Night was falling, the wind was rising, and Melba was coughing hard. They rode on and on, and the only thing to be seen in the distance was the jagged red line of the horizon.

"We won't get to the inn."

"What shall we do, Bismarck?"

"There are some caves near here."

"Oh, why, why am I so unfortunate!"

Bismarck rode ahead, keeping close to the hills, until he finally found the caves. There he made a bed of the saddle blankets and ponchos. Then he tied the horses in the grass so they could eat. And all the time Melba kept moaning:

"Why, why am I so unfortunate?"

Bismarck recalled that in his saddlebag he had an alcohol lamp and tea and cookies. What a pity the mule driver had gone ahead with the rest of the provisions! He went out to look for water at a spring he knew was near there. He did not know just where it was and it took

him a long time to find it. When he got back Melba accused him of the most utter cruelty. It did not matter. She was behaving like a spoiled child, and she would get over it. By the bluish light of the alcohol burner, while they drank their tea, Bismarck began to sing his own praises, since Melba did not seem inclined to do so.

"See what a good traveler I am! I've been around a good bit in my time. What would we have done if I hadn't known where these caves were? Suppose I hadn't remembered where the spring was?"

Melba finally smiled, with a voluptuousness that sent the blood coursing through Bismarck's veins. The caves were damp and smelled of fox, the water tasted brackish, but, in spite of everything, she smiled. Bismarck changed the conversation:

"All that I've done, I did for you, Melbita. What do I care about five thousand soles. That's nothing. I had something up my sleeve that would have fixed Alvaro Amenabar's clock. Many, many illegalities were committed. I did not expect anything from the judge; I let everything go by because I was going to draw up a powerful appeal. Don't you think for a minute that with me they could have got away with stealing the brief. I would have demanded guarantees, guarantees, from the subprefect and I would have made him send an armed escort with the mail. What a superb appeal I let slip through my fingers! But I did it all for you."

Melba would have preferred wooing of a less legal flavor, but she kept on smiling. They put out the alcohol lamp and went to bed. Once more the man knew that soft, rhythmic body, warm and caressing, perfumed with the ardent aroma of voluptuousness.

Bismarck had discovered pleasure when he was forty years old, and it seemed to him that the years before were meaningless, wasted on his faded wife and the mechanical handling of stamped paper. What had his triumphs meant? Legal chicanery, sly trickery. Now, only now, had he discovered the joy of the flesh—he could conceive of no other—and it was there in the form of a beautiful woman called Melba. She was already sleeping, and he fell asleep, his last thoughts of the joyous days they were going to spend at the seashore, far from the town, devoted only to love.

Doroteo and his companions approached the caves late at night. They had first gone to the inn and stolen the mule. Now they took the horses, too, tying the three animals in single file and leaving them ready to be driven away. All they had to do now was kill, kill, and

avenge the despoiling, the suffering, and the tears they had endured and the calamity which was coming. There were Bismarck Ruiz and his mistress. They had to make an end of them. Every wicked act has its punishment.

We ought to go in without making a noise, they thought. Bismarck would have a revolver. The night was very dark and the one who shot first would be the victor. It was almost impossible to see and the darkness and the wind hurt the eyes. Not for nothing did Quispe know the Righteous Judge, so he crept toward the cave where the light had showed, with his gun cocked. The darkness made it impossible to see anything. Only when the wind died down for a moment could he hear the sound of breathing. Little by little he began to make out the shape of the sleepers. Doroteo's hand trembled a little as he recited the Righteous Judge. He took aim. Which of the two would die first? It might be the poor woman who was innocent. What did she know about all this? If the woman was to be the second she would get a terrible fright. The shot would probably blow off Bismarck's head. Anyway, it's hard to kill. It's hard to cut down a life with your own hands. He had never killed and now he saw how hard it was. Maybe, if they were awake, he could kill them. But he didn't dare wake them up. The very prayer seemed to inspire him with pity. That helpless woman, this man who would come out of his sleep to find himself face to face with death. No, no two ways about it, he could not kill them. Maybe Jeronimo could. Or Condorumi. The worst of it was that they were going to think him a coward. He had to make an effort and kill them, or, at least, frighten them. If he could only be sure it would be the man that he would hit. The magazine was full. Five shots. He could fire them all. Jeronimo and Condorumi had their guns too. And there were more bullets. Why was he thinking all this? A single shot, well-aimed, is enough to kill a man. But he could not fire it. He could not start shooting at those dark shapes. No doubt about it, killing either came very easy or very hard. Or maybe what was happening was that the Righteous Judge would not let him shoot to save him. That might be it. He came away silently and rejoined his companions without a word of explanation.

"Aren't they there?" asked Jeronimo.

Doroteo remained thoughtful. Then he said:

"It's hard to kill . . . Do you want to?"

A feeling of pity for these defenseless beings and of revulsion from bloodshed came over Jeronimo too.

"I expect it is difficult to kill," he muttered.

They had never even thought about killing anybody, and they were confronted with a completely new situation. Besides, Doroteo believed in the Righteous Judge. Bismarck and Melba believed, too, and there they lay asleep and helpless. And as Condorumi never decided anything for himself, they left, satisfied with stealing the two horses and the mule. They would say that Bismarck and his sweetheart had run away.

Fiero listened to their story, watching them more out of his filmed-over eye than out of his good one, and then he growled:

"You cowardly Indians. It's always the same story with new hands. Why do you meddle in things that are for men? Learn to be men, you cowards!"

Over the highlands of Huarca a new day appeared.

When Bismarck discovered that the horses had disappeared he stood rooted to the ground. There was no doubt that they had been stolen. The clumps of hay to which he had tethered them were untouched, which would not have been the case if they had broken loose. When he did not come back, Melba went out to look, and then ran to him. She was in despair. The clumps of grass were not broken off or pulled up? "Look carefully at the ground." Maybe they had slipped out of their halters. "See if the halters are there." Worst of all, in a damp place, were the fresh tracks of shod horses. Theirs had not been wearing shoes.

"Bismarck, Bismarck, it's the bandits. Let's go!"

Melba dashed off through the grass and Bismarck followed her and managed to stop her, though it was due more to her fatigue than to his powers of conviction.

"Dear God, how unfortunate I am."

She wept long and copiously.

They made tea again and, as they were hungry, they ate up all the cookies.

"And now what are we going to do?" asked Melba.

"Wait for some traveler or mule driver to come by and lend us mounts,

or, at least, one for you."

"What? Who do you think is going to come through this God-forsaken place?"

"Then I'll go to the inn and get our mule driver."

"What! And leave me here alone? Not for one second."

"Then let's go together."

"And make me walk for nothing? I'm going back to town, I'm going back this very minute."

"It's thirty miles!"

"It's mostly down hill. I'm going."

"Don't be so impulsive, Melbita, wait a minute."

"Wait for the bandits to cut me to pieces? I'm going, I'm going."

She picked up her purse and started out. There was nothing for Bismarck Ruiz to do but throw the blankets and saddlebag over his shoulder and follow her.

Melba set out with high determination. It seemed as though she had energy enough to walk fifty miles. She did not speak a word; from time to time she dried her eyes with her handkerchief, and she did not even look at paunchy Bismarck, of sedentary habits, who trotted behind her, his nose red and beads of sweat pouring down his face, imploring her not to hurry so. His leggings were tight and made his ankles hurt. There came a moment when he had to take them off and put them in the saddlebag. His smart riding breeches showed his fat calves, and gave him a very funny appearance. Melba watched him out of the corner of her eye and she could not keep from smiling.

The road finally started downhill, but this was little help because by this time Melba had become very tired. There were no more caves on the broad hillside down which the road twisted and a storm seemed to be brewing. The woman leaned against Bismarck's weary shoulder and kept on. The ground grew rougher and more stony. As Melba coughed she felt as though she were being struck in the breast. She began to sob aloud, and Bismarck felt a great pity and, at the same time, a certain annoyance. What a beautiful, fragile, sad woman! Finally an Indian appeared, coming up the hill, driving a donkey before him.

They sat down to wait for him. After a long time he came up with them.

"I want to hire your donkey."

"No."

"Sell it to me."

"No, sir."

"Do it out of pity. This young lady cannot walk, she's sick. They have stolen our horses and she can't walk."

The Indian looked at them as if to say: "What do I care? You see what it's like to be in trouble, you damned stuck-up fools. When did you ever feel pity for us?" That was what he was really thinking. He gave the donkey a jerk and answered:

"The donkey doesn't belong to me."

Bismarck could endure no more and, pulling out his revolver, he fired a shot, and fierce insults, past the Indian's ear. The Indian dropped the halter and ran off. The donkey was old, hairy, and very clumsy, and they both had to mount him because Melba could not stay on by herself. The poor donkey toiled down, struggling and slipping. Over the hilltops, hurrying toward them, came a thick, gray rainstorm. Melba went on crying and Bismarck kept uselessly kicking the donkey in the sides to make it trot. The shower caught up with them and they put on their ponchos. It became harder to manage the donkey. The ponchos got wet, and when Melba felt this plaster of cold against her back she began hysterically to bewail her misfortune and tried to throw herself off the donkey. Fortunately the shower veered in another direction. The wind blew the clouds and the ponchos about, and, finally, the sun came out a little. Melba was so depressed that when the first trees and the roofs of the town, with their freshly washed red tiles, appeared she did not say a word or show any sign of satisfaction. Bismarck could feel her fever in his arms which were hot from encircling that body convulsed with coughing. The donkey fell down exhausted.

Fortunately, El Letrao appeared just then, a young man twenty-five years old who looked forty, and who, together with El Loco Pierolista, formed the town's two best-known characters. He was the son of the town clerk and he had completed his primary studies with great brilliance, according to the judgment of the whole town, for he had a

good memory and he learned his lessons by heart. "That's the way to study, young men." When he had finished school, in order not to fall behind on the road to knowledge, he undertook to memorize the dictionary word for word. The important people in town did not admire him so much now, and there were even some who made fun of him. Who could ever learn the dictionary by heart? He was crazy. But the country folk had a vast admiration for him. It was they who gave him the name of El Letrao, "The Man of Letters." He used to wander about the outskirts of the town, holding a black umbrella over his head with one hand, winter and summer, perhaps to keep his ideas from blowing away, and in the other, a thick red-bound dictionary. He walked along repeating the phrases aloud, looking upward so that his eyes might not try to help him with a furtive peep, and as he walked he would often stumble over a stone or step on the plants in the field. Then the country folk would say, "What a scholar!" The scholar had reached the letter D. He felt very important and his vanity increased when one day, turning the pages of the dictionary, he came upon a bust of Socrates, in which he saw a resemblance to himself. They both had the same flat nose. El Letrao strolled along as usual that afternoon, trying to cram half a column into his head, when Bismarck shouted to him:

"Please, sir. . . !"

El Letrao stopped with an expression of annoyance, frowning at the person who made bold enough to distract him from his lofty task. When he realized that it was Bismarck Ruiz who was calling him, he closed his umbrella and came over to him without doffing his scholarly calm. Melba Cortez was sitting beside the edge of the road, her skirt covered with donkey hairs, coughing hard.

"Sir, we have had a misfortune. And now, to make things worse, the donkey has given out, and I would like you to help us . . ."

El Letrao did not consider the manner in which his services were requested very satisfactory, for it made it seem as though he were to replace the donkey. Some more adequate form of expression could certainly have been found; but he overlooked it, for Don Bismarck seemed very upset. He really was, and he did not even notice that the Indian whose donkey he had taken and who had apparently run away, was there already, beside his animal, trying to get it to its feet. El Letrao asked circumspectly:

"And what ails this young lady who is coughing so?"

"I think she has a congestion of the lungs . . . and I would appreciate it if you would help me."

The man of Socratic nose and the lawyer carried Melba to the town in their arms. As they had to stop and rest every little while, it was dark when they arrived.

Melba sent for her friends, the Pimentel girls. The wind, the dampness, and the exertion had done their work, her fever went up and a hemorrhage set in that could not be checked. Melba gave Laura her purse that contained the five thousand soles, and, consumed by the fever, died before dawn.

Bismarck Ruiz cried like a child, and at times he blasphemed horribly, cursing his fate. And his grief grew when he saw that not one of all those who used to go to the parties came to the funeral. All alone, he took his dead love to the cemetery. Now more than ever she was La Costeña.

His family received him without reproaches. Not a word did his wife say, poor woman, her body wasted with work, and her breasts sagging with maternity.

One morning Bismarck went to his office. Life was recovering its slow, monotonous rhythm, and the days were becoming colorless again. There was a pile of briefs there. Bismarck picked one up and read it at length. He noticed a legal defect in it. His clerk with the magnificent handwriting was no longer there and his son had not yet come in, so he began to write himself, as one who returns from a dream to the gray grind of every day: The Honorable Judge of The Court of First Instance of the Province. . . .

One very cold, dull afternoon, with a hard wind blowing, Marguicha and Augusto were sitting together beside the lake on the side where the rushes grew. He began to hum a huainito:

Oh, little duck of gold,
Duck of the lake,
Let me get hold of you—
Give me good fortune!

Oh, little duck of gold,
Give me good fortune!

I am very poor
And I have none.

"Where do you get that?" asked Marguicha.

"Here," said Augusto, pointing to his heart.

"Is it true that the duck is made of gold?"

"That's what they say. This is an enchanted lake."

Marguicha kept thinking about the gold. Gold was beautiful. The gold of the sun, the gold of the wheat, the gold of metal. Now they had none of them and everything was sad. No, their bodies were still happy and they loved one another.

Augusto said:

"I am going to the jungle."

"To the forest?"

"Right to the forest, to gather rubber. You can make a lot of money with rubber. And then we'll buy ourselves a piece of land somewhere. We're going to have trouble here with that damned—"

"But what if I'm going to have a baby?"

"So much the better. You'll wait for me more faithfully."

"Take me with you."

"The jungle is no place for women. It's full of danger."

Augusto traded his share of the grain and twenty soles for the bay horse. Marguicha went to the house of Doña Felipa, one of the village women, to ask her for "love water." Doña Felipa had come to the fore after Nasha Suro's disappearance. She did not claim to be a witch. She knew about herbs for sickness, and especially for love, either to cure it or hold it. Eulalia and Marguicha mended Augusto's clothes and prepared food for the trip. When the mother was not looking, the girl sprinkled the fried chicken with love water. Augusto left.

"May luck go with you," said Rosendo.

Eulalia whimpered and his other relatives said their farewells in silence.

"Don't stay long," Marguicha called after him as he went off.

Augusto restrained his desire to look back for fear he might cry, and spurred his horse on to a gallop.

In the far-off capital of the department the newspaper La Verdad, published by "refractory elements," carried a brief note about the despoilment of the community of Rumi, and a long editorial dealing with the rights of the natives. The newspaper La Patria, published by "men of order," ran a long article on the uprising of the Indians of Rumi and a vehement editorial demanding guarantees. The article said, among other things, that Don Alvaro Amenabar had found himself forced to demand certain lands from the Indians who were occupying them illegally. The Indians had yielded at first, in view of the justice of the demand, but then, on the advice of agitators and the famous bandit, Fiero Vasquez, they had revolted and cruelly assassinated Mr. Roque Iniguez. Only the swift, energetic action of Lieutenant Brito, in charge of a squad of troopers, had prevented the death of other upright, respected persons. The matter had not ended there. Fiero Vasquez and ten of his highwaymen had robbed the mail which was carrying the brief which bore witness to the justice of Amenabar's claims. These same bandits were committing crimes of every sort.

Recently a lawyer had come to the capital of the province who was a member of the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Indian and who, under the cloak of humanitarianism, was upholding unjust reclamations which would only have the effect of stirring up more disorders. The editorial went on to speak of order and justice based on the real needs of the nation and not on the far-fetched aspirations of the natives led astray by professional agitators. It spoke of the landowners of the "rebellious province" as examples of industry and honesty, such as Don Alvaro Amenabar y Roldan, a man of vision, upright and worthy. Then it spoke of the lawlessness and the revolution that threatened the rights of property, legitimately and honestly come by, and it asked that a battalion of soldiers be sent to restore law and order, so necessary for the progress of the country, and so hampered by criminals and disloyal Peruvians.

The prefect of the department cut out this accurate information, as well as the patriotic editorial of La Patria, and sent them to the Minister of Government, with a long official letter in which he

confirmed the gravity of the situation and asked for instructions.

At Yananahui, when the villagers got up in the morning, they often found a big hole in the barn lot wall, made on purpose. After a wide search they managed to herd together the cows that had scattered over the hillsides. But many were missing. To whom could they complain? What could they do? And the worst of all was the loss of the two work oxen.

The bandits, except for Fiero Vasquez and Valencio, were in the largest of the caves, gathered around the fire. They had eaten and were now chewing their coca. Doroteo Quispe looked at the ugliness of all of them; Condorumi, the size of several of them; Jeronimo, the silent thoughtfulness of the Lawyer; but the veterans did not look kindly on any of the recruits. On the contrary, they neglected no opportunity to make fun of them as cowards. That night, the one who began the jeering was a fellow nicknamed Toad because of his bulging eyes, wide, thin mouth, and flat face. He was very ugly and he did, indeed, look like a toad.

"So we have young ladies with us. Will one of the young ladies give me a kiss?"

Then in a high-pitched voice he gave an imitation of a well-brought-up young lady.

"Oh, no, no, you naughty bandits, you rude bandits, you dirty bandits. Mamma, mamma. . . !"

The peals of laughter were so uproarious that they made the flames flicker. Even the thoughtful Lawyer laughed a little. The recruits looked at one another. Doroteo bellowed:

"How about it, Toad? Are you looking for a fight?"

He roared insults at him. Somebody put a knife into Doroteo's hand. Another handed him a poncho which he wrapped around his forearm. Toad was already fixed up in the same manner. The rest of the men lined up against the walls of the cave, shrinking back into the hollows of the rock. On one side was the fire, and in the middle, bent over,

crouching, were the combatants. It was so still that the crackling of the wood on the fire could be heard. The Toad smiled confidently. Doroteo's mouth was open a little showing his teeth.

The Toad gave a leap forward and Quispe clumsily drew back. He looked more like a bear than ever. The Toad thought to give him a lesson in the use of the knife. The Bear thought to defend himself and attack if he got a chance. He had never fought before and he was afraid. He had seen fights twice at the fairs and he had liked the style of one who remained on the defensive, biding his time until the other gave him an opening.

"Let's go, Toad," shouted one of the men encouragingly.

The Toad made a sidewise lunge and Doroteo successfully side-stepped. What do you know about that lucky Indian! Now they would see something. The knives gleamed, making slashes of light, while the Toad jumped circling about and Doroteo fearfully fended him off. The Toad feinted as though he were aiming at his breast and then, changing the knife to his other hand, lunged at his stomach. But Doroteo swiftly lowered his poncho-wrapped arm, which he had raised to shield his heart, and the Toad's knife stuck into the cloth as Doroteo managed to cut him on the shoulder.

"Blood," howled one of the bandits.

The shadows of the fighters fought on the walls of the cave, reaching one another quickly and easily. The eyes of the spectators glittered. Blood was reddening the Toad's arm and beginning to drip on to the floor. The veteran stopped smiling. He realized that his rival was no green hand. He saw that he was inexperienced, but that he had a good eye and a steady hand. In the silence, the panting of the fighters was like that of the death agony.

"Get him, Toad," shouted an encouraging voice.

The fighters made a series of feints, feeling one another out. "Are you scared, Toad?"

The Toad began to insult Doroteo, daring him to attack. That was what he was waiting for. There is nothing easier than to get at a greenhorn who takes the offensive.

"Come on, you coward." And he lowered his guard to show his bravery.

Doroteo was over his fright. He was as yet unwounded and his rival was bleeding.

"Fight, you sissies, and stop fooling around."

Their feet were red with blood. The Toad realized that he would have to bring things to a quick finish or he would become so weak that it would be dangerous. He leaped, he turned, he changed his knife from hand to hand, and he closed in again. This time he was not entirely unsuccessful, and he managed to gash his opponent's thigh. Doroteo, for the first time, attacked just as the other was savoring his successful thrust. God, what a slash! He cut right through the Toad's cheek, and the wad of coca dropped out through the purple opening. The ground was now slippery with blood which steamed in the cold air of the night. One of the two had to die, and they were both wild with a rage that was all the more infuriating because they had to control it to calculate their own blows and ward off those of the other.

"Close in, Toad!"

The Toad was shedding tears of rage and impotence. He would have liked to slash Doroteo's belly to ribbons, but the latter was holding it in, well protected by his poncho-wrapped arm, that steady guard of an arm that protected his breast as well, that broad breast thrust forward so the knife could not easily reach the heart. Maybe in the back, if he did not turn too quickly. The Toad opened up his guard. Doroteo retreated. That damned Indian could tell everything he was up to! With the left hand then. Doroteo, whirling rapidly, almost fell. The Toad made a note of that slip. The death of at least one of them seemed certain. The spectators swallowed nervously. They were moved by this bravery.

"These are men," one remarked.

Life was stubborn and perishable; death, hard and close at hand.

"You're going to bleed to death."

"Finish it up."

Not one of the spectators felt pity. They watched with savage delight, restraining their enthusiasm so as not to interfere with the duel. Condorumi and Jeronimo, who had been trembling at the start, had now become quiet. They saw death as the inexorable law of the knife. A star that had been watching from a distant corner shivered a little. The fire was still burning in calm fullness. The Toad turned his back to

the fire and his shadow darkened the floor. Then he jumped quickly from side to side, and Doroteo, turning, slipped and fell. This was what the Toad had been waiting for. He threw himself upon his fallen adversary to run him through the breast, but Quispe quickly jerked up his legs and with a powerful movement threw him against one of the spectators, though not before he had received a long wound on one of his legs. Both got to their feet again roaring with rage. The blood steamed, and those who were watching were becoming as excited as beasts of prey at the sight of blood. Their bodies could not keep quiet. Condorumi, especially, had become enraged when he saw the Toad attack a man who was down. But the end was slow in coming. The bandits shouted:

"Now ..."

The knives no longer glittered. They dripped blood like the tongue of a puma. There was blood on the floor, on the ponchos, on their bodies, on their faces. Doroteo had received a wound on the forehead and the thick red liquid rolled down into his eyes, interfering with his sight. Blood. The one who weakened first would die.

The Toad was afraid he was going to be the one, and he made haste.

"Go after him, Doro!" shouted Jeronimo as he saw Quispe miss an opening from being overcautious.

Doroteo thrust out his arm and the Toad jumped quickly back, bumping against Condorumi, who lost his self-control and pushed him forward so hard that he fell face downward. Doroteo received him with his knife which he plunged into his neck, laying it open with a single thrust.

"That's no fair," shouted the voice which had been friendly to the Toad, as he was pushed; and a man fell upon Condorumi, knife in hand.

Jeronimo, too, whipped out his knife, but Condorumi had already caught his assailant by the arm and threw him against a projecting rock, splitting his head open. A flood of insults poured out, and a free-for-all fight began. Jeronimo was wounded in the breast by one of the bandits and the Lawyer came over to help him, while Doroteo fought off two as he backed toward the entrance and Condorumi was yelling for a knife. At that moment Fiero Vasquez appeared, revolver in hand, and with one leap, he was in the middle of the cave, shouting in his powerful, emphatic voice:

"Stop it, you scum, what are you doing?"

They all stopped, and Valencio, who was at the entrance, with one punch to the nape of the neck, knocked out a stubborn fellow who kept on attacking Doroteo. The bandits muttered but put away their knives. Fiero spoke:

"I don't want any explanations. I saw the whole thing. But if any one tries to keep the quarrel going I can promise him five shots in the head."

He walked out, followed by Valencio, and shouted back from the door —not for nothing was he the undisputed leader—:

"If anybody feels like fighting with me, we can start right now."

Nobody answered him.

Fiero fought from the side on which he had his good eye, and, as he was very agile and strong, he could deal a mortal blow before his rival had time to adapt himself to this new technique. Few could hope to take advantage of the fact that Vasquez was one-eyed.

It had started to rain. The bandits laid the two dead men at the entrance to the cave to bury them the next day. Then they fixed up their wounds with alcohol, iodine, and cotton, and lay down in the corners that were not splashed with blood. In the middle of the floor the blood still gleamed by the light of the dying fire. Some of the bandits were already sleeping, while others were talking over the fight. The three recruits and two veterans were wounded, and the long wound on Doroteo's leg pained him intensely. As they did not have many bandages they had dressed it with cotton and bound it up with his woolen sash. The only thing that surprised the budding duellist was the fact that he had not once remembered the Righteous Judge. God must have meant him to be saved even if he did not say the prayer. The Lawyer interrupted his reflections to say:

"Now you've killed and tasted blood. Now you're one of us."

This was how these Indians of the community really became a part of Fiero Vasquez's band.

Many young men left Yananahui and some mature ones. They hoped

to find a better place to live, and perhaps a little success. It was said that in other places wages were good and a person could get along well. Calixto Paucar left; Amadeo Illas and his wife; Demetrio Sumallacta; Juan Medrano and Simona, whose parents urged them to get married the first chance they had; Leon Mayta and his family; Romulo Quinto, his wife and little Simeon, unaware as yet of all these hardships, and many others from the community. Adrian Santos wanted to go, too, but his parents kept him with them saying he was too young yet.

Things got worse in the community. The livestock kept disappearing, and the crops, on the lands ravaged by frost and plowed up so hurriedly, gave no promise of a good harvest. It was going to be a bad year: God knows if they could raise enough to carry them through.

Besides, there were signs that Don Alvaro Amenabar was not through yet. The overseer Ramon Briceno had threatened that they would soon have to obey him as the rancher's representative. It looked as though he intended to starve them out, beginning by taking away their livestock. If that was the case, it would be better to go away. Rosendo said nothing. What could he say? It made him suffer to see the dispersion of the community, but he could not hold back anybody with the promise of slavery or, under the best of circumstances, hunger. There were many others who would have left if they had had any definite place to go.

The majority felt too old to change their habits or they had large families and could not endanger them. Those who left did not know exactly where they were going or what work they were going to find. Some, like Augusto Maqui, were very hopeful from what they had heard. They took the path that went past the village, or the one that crossed between the stone ruins and lost itself on the slopes of El Alto, trying to find the road from the village, or the one that ascended the hills of the mountain range and went crawling along the barren uplands.

They went slowly, laden down with heavy bundles. They were going into the world.

Two children and an old woman died of influenza.

And then the weather was very bad while they were hoeing up the

potatoes, and Leandro Mayta, who had been weakened by the malaria, caught pneumonia and died, too.

They buried him in the cemetery they had laid out on one of the gentler slopes of El Alto. There was no better place to put it, for in the meadows it would have become flooded in the winter—the water stood over a foot deep—and on the slopes of Rumi lay the fields and the village.

The new cemetery was very stony and they had to dig Leandro's grave twice, for the first time they struck a huge rock and they could not go down any further.

Leandro went to keep eternal company with good Anselmo, the old woman, and the children. At that altitude where the cold tends to preserve the bodies, they were probably lying there, under the storms, the fogs, the sun, and the wind, like a family sleeping in a great house of stone.

10

The Pleasures and Sorrows of Coca

Naturally, the villagers were acquainted with the sweet coca. They bought the fragrant green leaves in the stores in town, or one of them made a trip for it to the warm valleys where it was raised. When steeped in lime it becomes sweet and produces a subtle enervation or a pleasant excitement. Coca is good for hunger, for thirst, for weariness, for heat, for cold, for sorrow, for joy, for everything. It is good for life. The soothsayers, and those who want to know the future, question the coca. Gifts of coca are made to enchanted hills, lakes, and rivers. With coca the sick get well. With coca in their hands the dead depart this life. Coca is wise and good.

Amadeo Illas was always chewing it, for he could not get along without it. Now he would know it better, for he was going to work at Calchis, a coca plantation.

He and his wife traveled many miles before they got there. One of the overseers assigned to them a house of adobe which stood in front of a cornfield that was getting ripe. There were two rooms in the house. The cornfield was theirs too. Besides, he gave them ten measures of wheat, ten of potatoes, and five of corn. Finally he said to Illas:

"This place was rented to a hand who went away, the scamp. You will pay rent for it every three months, working in the temple at leaf gathering and cultivating. If you work well, you can make fifty cents a day extra. That will come to about forty soles a month above what you pay for rent."

Amadeo Illas knew what cultivating was, and he knew about picking the leaves off the coca plant, but he did not know what temple meant. After hesitating a moment, he asked:

"What is the temple?"

The foreman smiled as he answered:

"What a question! The temple is the place where they raise the coca. The temple on this plantation is down that way, in that valley along the Calchis River."

He looked them over and asked:

"And where do you come from and what did you raise that you don't know about this?"

"We're from the community of Rumi and we raised wheat and corn, and lately things that grow in the uplands."

"Ah, that's very different from raising coca, but you'll learn."

When the foreman had gone Amadeo Illas and his wife looked the house over. The rooms were large and the porch was wide. It looked like a house in a happy community. Then they went to the cornfield, which was situated on a hillside. It was large, and there were squash, pumpkins, beans, and lima beans growing there. The corn was filling out already. There would soon be roasting ears. They went back to the house and the woman began to cook their meal in two pots that she had brought with her. She found a broken one into which she put their parched corn. They had very little salt and Amadeo said that he would go to the ranch house for some the next day.

They had gone there when they first arrived. It lay beyond a far-off slope where the smoke of other cabins showed. When he went, besides the salt, he bought some red pepper at the company store, a mirror he had liked and needles and thread, and also two muslin shirts, for they had told him that those of wool were too hot for the leaf gathering. These new acquisitions and the food supplies put him thirty soles in debt. That was not much if he could make fifty cents a day. What a fine salary. Other ranches paid ten and twenty. That was why they had come all the way to Calchis.

After a few days the overseer told Illas to get ready to go down to the coca fields. His wife prepared a knapsack full of parched corn and Amadeo started as soon as it was day. His wife anxiously watched him go, distressed at their separation and worried over the new work which would probably be hard. Besides, it was the first time she had ever been left in a house by herself and she was afraid. But she said nothing and Amadeo went off down the hills, soon disappearing behind a cliff.

As he walked down it reminded him a little of the grazing lands of Norpa. Farther ahead the hills broke up into a kind of terrace and the path skirted along beside them balancing itself not to fall off. At last

he reached the banks of a river and walked along near the edge. He met another Indian who was going in the same direction and they walked together downstream. Amadeo began to ask him questions.

"So this is the Calchis River?"

"This is it."

"And where are the coca fields?"

"Farther down. Is that where you're headed for?"

"Yes, I'm going to pick. And you?"

"I pick, too."

Then he said his name was Hipolito Campos and that he had been born there on the ranch. For a year he had come down at picking time. Amadeo looked at him. He was young but he gave the impression of being an old man. His skin was faded and, altogether, he had a withered air. The Calchis River ran noisily along over its rocky bottom, and both banks were worn away and showed old substrata of the earth.

Back from the banks, on both sides, grew tall, thick strips of woodland where happy birds sang. One could be heard above all the others with its loud peculiar cry, "Quien, quien, quien." It was the quienquien. Amadeo said he had never heard it before. Hipolito looked at him in astonishment and then he began to talk about the bird, raising his voice to make himself heard above the rushing of the river. Just then they saw a quienquien in the branches of a gualango. It was a bright yellow, dotted with jet-black spots. It shone like a blob of sunlight and night.

"Pretty, isn't it?"

"Pretty," answered Amadeo.

Hipolito told him that he had found nests of all kinds of birds except the quienquien. They hid them perfectly but they themselves were not so shy. They would come to the house, especially the kitchen, to eat up the bacon and other provisions. He also told him a story about some city fellow who was going along this road during leaf-gathering time, with a group of Indians. He had never heard the quienquien. When the bird began to ask its question, "Who, who?" the city fellow, thinking somebody was talking to him answered, "It's me, it's me." The

bird kept on and the man, thinking his questioner could not make him out, shouted, "It's me, Mr. So-and-So, the one wearing a black hat." They both laughed.

Amadeo told him the story of "The Rivals and the Judge," which was the first one he thought of. The laughter was not so hearty but, in one of those clear intuitions that come from the heart, they felt that they were friends.

The woods grew thicker. Down the paths that descended from the heights came groups of workers.

"They are all leaf gatherers," Hipolito explained.

Suddenly they came upon the first plantings of coca. And in another moment they had reached the bunkhouse which was next to the house of the overseers. It was a large shed with walls made of adobe, a wide door, and two windows. There were many workers there already. Others kept coming, hanging their ponchos and knapsacks on pegs on the walls. Each one had his own place which habit had made his. There was not room enough for all inside and Hipolito slept on the porch. There were pegs on the outside of the walls too. In proof of friendship he and Amadeo both hung their things on the same peg. Then, to kill time, since the leaf gathering was not to begin until the next day, they went for a walk around the place.

The fields of coca were huge and extended the whole length of the valley to a place so far away they did not reach it; and on one side up to the gulch that led down to the river, and on the other to the cliffs that marked the end of the mountains.

The coca, a leafy bush, a little taller than a man, grew in the shade of the orange, medlar, guava, and lemon trees, in rows forming beds. From the tops of the tall trees the song of the doves greeted Amadeo. If Demetrio could only be here! It was the season of the oranges and the ground was covered with them, their bright yellow standing out against the green opulence of the plant-covered ground. The coca swayed gracefully in the wind and from the laden trees the oranges dropped to the ground with a soft thud. Amadeo and Hipolito began to eat the fallen oranges. They were very good and they tasted even better because of the heat.

Hipolito told him that the coca, even though it looked so flourishing, was a delicate plant. It had to be watered at night, for if they did it during the day the sun heated the water and that was bad for the

roots. There was a green worm, the inchworm, which ate the leaves, and when they got bad the bushes had to be sprayed, at night, too, so that the worms would fall off into the water and drown. The trees were not planted there for the fruit, but because the coca bushes had to have shade. Besides, they lived only a few years, and the least little thing killed them. They had to be replanting them all the time. Amadeo looked at the plant and it all seemed logical to him. God only knows what secrets this delicate plant contains within itself to enable it to extract from the dark forces of the earth the substance that makes its leaves so highly prized by the man of the Andes.

When they returned, late in the afternoon, the heat had grown more intense. The sun shimmered on the red cliffs of the canyon and filtered aggressively through the branches of the trees. Amadeo put his hand on a rock. It was burning hot. The cliffs would be a griddle. A damp vapor rose from the earth and the air was filled with the odor of orange blossoms, rotting oranges, green coca, plowed-up earth, exuberant forest. Amadeo felt that he had fallen into an active joint, or rather, a warm armpit, of the earth.

The next day, very early, the overseers called up their workers. A hundred men lined up in their white shirts and black pants, their leather sandals and straw hats, their faces hardly visible in the vague light of the morning under the broad brims of their hats. They called the roll and kept a list of the hands who were missing. Then the head overseer called out several who looked very sick and told them to prune trees with Amadeo, to whom he said:

"You're to go with them till you get used to the climate."

He sent the rest out to pick leaves, giving each a big blanket called a pullo, and he said to two of his subordinates:

"Go round up the stragglers. The lazy hounds pretend they are sick. Leave only the ones who are in bed and have fever."

Amadeo and the pruners were given billhooks and set to work near the house so that they would not interfere with the pickers. The other hands disappeared in the distance, going to the outer edge of the plantings. The sun was beginning to smart. The pruners were supposed to trim out the lower branches of the shade trees so that there would be plenty of light and air over the coca.

What a pampered little bush! If the branches were thick and leafy they had to ease them down with ropes so as not to break the bush. The pickers went by carrying large bundles of leaves tied up in their blankets. They opened them, pouring out the leaves, on a flat terrace of tamped-down earth which lay open to the sun in front of the house of the overseers. The hands in charge of the drying spread the leaves out in a thin layer. His fellow pruners told Amadeo that the leaves had to be very well dried otherwise they would spoil, turning brown and white around the edges. The same thing would happen if they got the least bit wet. The dryers had to keep an eye on the skies to know when there was any danger of a shower, so as to gather up the coca and put it under shelter in time. Well, thought Amadeo, what a fussy thing coca is!

One day a pacemaker appeared, a tall, strong half-breed, with powerful hands, who counted out ninety rows in the bed where the pruners were working and began to pick the ninety-first row. Amadeo found out that other hands were coming behind, and the pacemaker, who was one of the best and strongest pickers, went ahead, counting the rows so as to leave a certain number for each of the workers. The picking seemed easy. The man bent the bush down and ran his hands along the slender branches, stripping the leaves off onto the blanket he had spread out under the plant. As soon as the pacemaker had finished his row he went on to another bed and carried out the same operation. The next day the vanguard of the pickers began to arrive and, several days later, the bulk of them. They picked slowly, with an air of fatigue. Amadeo thought he would do well at it. He believed he was strong and quick.

His friend Hipolito was one of those who kept close to the pacemaker. Amadeo slept beside him but they hardly talked. They were very tired when they got back, and they went to sleep as soon as they had finished eating their meal of boiled wheat. The food was what bothered Amadeo most, aside from the mosquitoes. They gave them three gourdfuls of wheat a day. As the oranges were getting scarce and the parched corn he had brought along was all gone, he began to grow tired of this monotonous, barely-salted wheat. The other hands did not seem to mind. They ate up their serving without saying anything. As for the vipers, which give the coca fields a bad name, he had not seen any. The one who was afraid of them was his friend Hipolito. He told how he had seen his brother die from snakebite. The workers said to him:

"Don't be afraid, Hipolito. That only makes it worse."

But he was always afraid. For greater safety he would make up his bed inside a barrier made of his scarf, the same long red sash he wore wrapped around his waist during the day. Like all these sashes it was thick and he propped it in place with stones. The belief is that if the vipers, as they go crawling along in the night, run into an unknown object, especially something made of wool, they will turn back.

Yet, in spite of everything, Hipolito was bitten. He woke up calling Amadeo, who slept beside him, and then ran to the house of the overseers, followed by his friend. They were all there as well as the owner, who was called Cosme and who had arrived that day to see how the work was getting along. Don Cosme lighted a candle to examine the little wound there in the middle of the breast where the shirt lay open, revealing the powerful chest, and almost screamed:

"Viper!"

If only it had been the sting of a scorpion or some other insect! Hipolito let out a hoarse groan, and Don Cosme grabbed the bell that hung from a mango beam. Lan, lan, lan, lan! It was as though the overseers' house had caught fire. Then he cut through the wound to form a cross and the blood began to gush out. Many peons were coming up, roused by the bell, only half-awake, lax with sleep, heat, and darkness.

"Viper, viper!" was all Don Cosme said to them, but that single word brought them wide-awake. "Bring me live coals," Don Cosme shouted, forgetting that it was the middle of the night; but he immediately ripped out an oath, adding, "Where the hell would there be live coals now! Light up the forge and heat two irons. Quickly, quickly!" Everything happened so fast. "Wait a minute . . . somebody bring lemons, plenty of lemons."

The peons who had started to run stopped to hear this last order and then hurried on, swallowed up in the darkness. In the meantime Amadeo was watching in silence, while Hipolito kept moaning in a voice that was the very sound of terror:

"I'm going to die, master. Don't let me die, master!"

Don Cosme answered:

"Come to the water, immediately."

Near the house was a big ditch that was always full of water which was used to water the plants.

"Get in there!" ordered Don Cosme.

Hipolito got in up to his neck.

"Hold his head!" said Don Cosme to Amadeo, who got in with him, holding him up by his bushy hair so he would not go under.

The water was very cold, or perhaps it was just the fright, because Amadeo could feel the chill creep into his very brain. Don Cosme put the candle down beside the ditch, shielding it from the wind behind a stone, and pulled the bloody shirt off Hipolito's shivering body.

"The devil!" he said. "It's beginning to swell. Pinch yourself. Can you feel it?"

Hipolito pinched his breast, and answered with a howl of anguish:

"I can't feel anything. I'm going to die. Don't let me die, master!"

It was a hot, heavy night, full of tremulous shadows. It was hard to make out the rectangular silhouettes of the houses and the round ones of the near-by trees. An occasional firefly flitted past weaving a pattern of light.

"Don't let me die, master!"

In the distance the heavy sound of the bellows of the forge could be heard and an encouraging blaze sprang up.

"Hurry, you fellows!" cried Don Cosme.

Just then those who had gone for the lemons came with them. They slashed the golden fruit open with their machetes and squeezed the juice into Hipolito's open mouth. The emaciated, corpse-like face closed its mouth to swallow the juice, and the tendons stood out like white cords.

"Be calm," said Don Cosme. "The water will keep your body cold and won't let the poison advance. The lemons will do their part too. And the irons will be here in a minute."

As he spoke he remembered that he had wanted to try to burn the wound with the candle and he told Hipolito to raise up his chest. But all he did was to get tallow all over it. The damp chest glistened, showing a horrible swelling. Then he took matches, but they fizzled out as the flame approached the wound. The poison had made great

headway. Hipolito did not even feel the fire.

"Don't let me die . . . a little more lemon, fellows. That's right . . . !"

The faces of all were bent over the bitten man and brown hands reached out toward his mouth, over and over again, squeezing the lemons dry. The other men finally arrived with the irons.

"Just give me one and keep the other hot," said Don Cosme, exasperated to see that they were bringing him both irons at the same time.

He took the red-hot iron and thrust it deep into the man's chest. The flesh sputtered, giving off a penetrating fume. Some recalled, with disgust, the smell of frying pork and they all felt the deepest pity for poor Hipolito. Meanwhile Don Cosme turned the bar from side to side, and the flesh and the iron sizzled devouring one another, the swelling, the poison, and the fire.

"That's the way, master . . . May God repay you . . . Burn it, master!"

The wounded man felt no pain. The iron had cooled off completely and Don Cosme called out for the other. And once more the heated bar, almost white-hot and distended with the heat, buried itself in the swollen, poisoned flesh.

"Burn it, master, burn it!"

The master went over all the swelling with the iron, to the very edges, up to where the flesh showed itself to be alive by its pain.

"Not there ... no ... ayay ... ! It burns!" And then he muttered, "More to the middle, burn it well, master," defending himself against himself.

The poison could not circulate any more through this burned, dead flesh and Don Cosme considered the cure complete.

It did not seem prudent to go back to bed, and so Amadeo, Hipolito, and all those who slept together spent the rest of the night by the ditch. The birds awoke joyfully, with the happiness that was natural to them, but on that occasion their voices seemed out of place, as though they should not be indifferent to the night's misfortune. Their happy bluster, nevertheless, filled the dawn like the very light, and poor Hipolito was very glad to be alive.

The peons searched the bed and all around until they found the snake

hidden in a pile of rocks. It was yellow with white spots. An atuncuyana. Each peon wanted to avenge himself with a blow for his fright and the possible danger of death he had run. The graceful, rounded body of the snake quickly became a mass of broken flesh.

"Burn it up," Don Cosme ordered.

It was carried on a shovel to an improvised pyre. And it was a sight to behold the mangled shape, with its flat head, still writhing and threshing about among the flames.

Don Cosme gave Hipolito a salve. Amadeo looked at the terrible wound in astonishment. Not even on the most abused horse had he ever seen such a gall. The worst of it was that Hipolito did not get back his strength. He got so pale he was almost transparent and one of his arms shook all the time. They sent him home and everybody predicted he would not live long.

After a week at pruning, during which he found, up in an orange tree, a yellow intihuaraca snake which he cut in two with his saw, Amadeo Illas was notified that he was to start gathering.

They put him, with ten slow workers whom the overseers had picked out, alongside the pacemaker, who was already up to the middle of the fields.

"Pacemaker, leave eleven more rows for these. And you can be grateful that we're putting you here, one because he's new and the others because they're worthless. We ought to put you on a separate job to get the laziness out of you."

Amadeo was unaware that these two overseers had taken advantage of his wife. When they had gone to round up the slackers one said to the other:

"Over there lives a good-looking girl who has just arrived, and her husband is away picking."

They dismounted by the fire where she was cooking her food.

"We've come to see what you're like," said one of them.

By the time she realized what they meant to do and tried to run away

one of them had caught her by the wrist. They dragged her into the house and raped her. The girl, who had never been mistreated in her life, wept bitterly over her humiliation.

"It's because we're poor that you take advantage of us, because we're poor and can't defend ourselves . . . Cowards!"

The overseers laughed and said anybody could see she was dumb.

The new worker, imitating what he had seen, spread out his blanket and then pulled down the bush and energetically began to strip off the leaves. Was this all there was to it? It was easy. All you had to do was see that you got all the leaves.

In a little while he had finished one row. The pacemaker was ahead of him and he inquired about the next row to start on.

"You know how to pick," said the pacemaker.

But in a little while he noticed that his hands were beginning to smart. The branches were rough and covered with black bark, against which the soft, green, oval-shaped leaves stood out in contrast. To get them all off, the branch had to be stripped close and this irritated the hand. The stooping position and the continuous movement of the arms made the back ache. The sun was beginning to get hot. He could not go so fast now. The lagging workers caught up with him. They were very pale as the result of malaria and one of them had a cough.

"Don't hurry so," they said to him.

The more advanced ones of the other group had caught up with them too. In the distance glimmered the white shirts of the slower ones.

His blanket was now full and Amadeo had to carry his coca to the drying terrace. When he returned there were more pickers in his section. The leaves made a gentle rustle as they pulled them off. They stood bent over the plants intent on their task. Their faces glistened with sweat and their damp shirts were stuck to their bodies. Amadeo resumed his work. When he began on a new row the pacemaker was already in the next patch. He became one of a group of pickers. Soon a wave of pickers swept past and he and the slower ones were left behind, though not quite the last.

As he worked on, Amadeo's hands began to smart more. He looked at them and found them covered with water blisters. Fortunately the bell rang for lunch. He lined up with his gourd in front of the kettle and

received his ladle of wheat. The cook suffered from chronic malaria and could not pick any more. They ate in silence, prepared their wads of coca, and went back to work. Amadeo's hands hurt worse than before. His shoulders and his back hurt too. The blisters burst and bits of whitish skin stuck to the rough branches. A slimy liquid oozed out on his palms which made the smarting worse, and yet he had to go on stripping the leafy branches which seemed to be armed with claws. Now he was way back, even behind the laggers, but still not among the very last who would take several days to get there. His hands began to bleed.

The pain made him dizzy and he stopped to rest on the low curb of a well. One of the peons was doing his row badly, neglecting some of the leaves on the bushes. An overseer saw him and, slinking up behind him, he gave him a blow with a stick on his bent back which knocked the man to the ground. The overseer roared:

"I told you that nobody was going to leave these plants half-picked. Get up and go to work before I lay you out for good."

The peon, making an effort, got to his feet and started on the plant once more. Amadeo got up from where he was sitting to go on with the work.

"What were you doing there?" asked the overseer, coming toward him.

Amadeo began to pick, feeling very humiliated. It seemed to him that it was a stick coming toward him, not a man. The overseer reached him. Amadeo was struggling on in spite of his pain. A shower of green leaves, now spotted with red, fell on the blanket.

"Well, so you've already got yourself into a mess. Go to the bunkhouse for today."

He tied up the leaves he had picked and left.

He emptied the leaves on the terrace and then he did not know what to do. The smarting in his hands was getting worse and there was nobody there who could help him. If only his friend Hipolito had not left! After a long time the cook came to stir the kettle with a long spoon, and when he saw Amadeo sitting there with his hands spread out, palms up, on his knees, he got a tallow candle out of a cupboard in the wall, and said to him:

"Rub them with this. This is a mean thing: I had it, everybody gets it. It will happen to you three or four times until finally a thick callous

forms. It's a dog's life we lead here. The worst thing of all is the malaria. I'm in bad shape, and that's why they've put me in the kitchen. Every other day I have chills, and I'm weak all the time. This is a dog's life. . . ."

Amadeo rubbed his hands with the tallow and it soothed the smarting a little.

"Why don't you leave?" he inquired.

"Leave? And who would pay what I owe? I am in debt up to my neck, and I still have to pay for the quinine I take which does me no good any more. For quinine only helps at the start. Afterwards it doesn't do a thing for you. . . ."

The cook shambled off. His face was as yellow as a banana skin.

That day came to a sad end for Amadeo. He did not even listen to the song of the turtledoves, whose blue plumage dotted the red twilight that enveloped the trees. Amadeo could not even hold the gourd he ate from, nor make his bed, nor get out his little gourd of lime, nor prepare his wad of coca. Nor even drive off the mosquitoes. He stayed awake until very late. His back began to ache again. Somebody coughed. Someone else said he was getting a fever. The sleep of the others was pitiful. He filled both his cheeks with coca, and finally dropped off to sleep.

He did not go out to work the next day. Nor the next nor the next. In two weeks the pacemaker had covered the plantation. Then, following the same system, began the cultivating. The pacemaker did his share in twenty days. From then on he could make fifty cents a day, the same as those who could finish their work. But when Amadeo tried to use the spade his hands began to bleed again. These weeds were not like those in the wheat or the corn. Their leaves and roots grew with all the strength that a fertile soil and tropical climate give. The spade had to go in deep and turn the grass over, smothering it under its own dirt. No matter how hard they worked there were very few who managed to make anything. Amadeo, waiting for his hands to heal, could see how much of an effort the other peons put into the work, and how it wore out their malaria-ridden bodies. When the cultivating was finished, the earth and the bushes formed a single gray mass under a canopy of green.

In the warehouses rose green hills of the aromatic leaves, which were either packed into bales or put into banana baskets to be sold in the village markets. There, those who enjoyed their coca could buy it without knowing anything of its sorrows, just as Amadeo had done before.

The pacemaker and a dozen or so of the healthiest, most capable peons received ten or fifteen soles when payday came. The others had barely made enough to cover their expenses. And others, not even that. These, who were sickly or weak, went deeper into debt. As Amadeo had not been able to do anything but the pruning, he saw his debt increase by twenty soles.

It was very hard for him to climb uphill. His wife received him with an air of sadness.

"How did you make out?"

He showed her his blistered hands, so raw that they oozed blood. She did not say a word to him about how the overseers had taken advantage of her.

In the days that followed, the wife tried to cure her husband by encouraging him. He would be able to work and make money. He would not only be able to pay for their place, but he would learn to do the work so well that he could keep up with the pacemaker. Then they would have to give him money. Amadeo, who had seen the work, did not say anything. It seemed easy, but it was very hard. To make matters worse, he came down with malaria. First he had a chill that made his teeth chatter and his whole body shake. Then his fever began to rise, enveloping him like a smothering flame. The sweat poured from his body and he became delirious. The attack lasted two or three hours. His wife went to the ranch house and brought a bottle of quinine that cost her ten soles.

But in spite of everything, Amadeo spent thirty days shaking the bed with the shivering of his body and frightening his poor wife with his hallucinations and delirium. When he got better he had an attack of melancholy, and could not eat and got thinner and thinner. The only thing that soothed him a little and made him forget his sorrows was the coca. She went for a chicken, to one of the cabins that could be seen in the distance, and there they told her that malaria acted that

way. If her husband kept going down to the coca fields he would never get over it. The hand whose place Amadeo had taken had died of malaria.

The latter went to talk with the head overseer to ask him to give him work on the highlands. But he flatly refused, saying he could not start a bad example.

It would be time to pick again and the sickness would come back. There was nothing to do but go away. Where to? He already owed sixty soles and as they knew he was from Rumi they would go there to look for him. Perhaps to another ranch. . . .

They reached the Lamas Ranch. There they did not give them a house nor ground to cultivate because there were none available. Until Amadeo and his wife could put up their own house they would have to sleep in a sheepfold and eat in the kitchen with the servants. In a few days two overseers from Calchis showed up, looking for them. The rancher of Lamas paid their debt and they were able to stay on. But they were shackled once more. What could they do?

They needed only a little piece of land to live and it cost so dear.

11

Blood in the Jungle

Three powerful emotions came together and intermingled in Augusto Maqui's soul on his trip to the forest.

One of these was when he said good-bye to his horse in Chachapoyas. As he parted from him he took his leave of the last villager. Benito Castro had been more fortunate, for he had not had to suffer the sorrow of parting with his horse Lucero. Augusto patted the bay's neck, reluctantly took the thirty soles he had been paid for him; and stood watching the new owner lead him down the street until they disappeared around a corner.

There are no words to describe the sorrow of a country man who is left on foot, without a horse, in a world he does not know. The animal suffers too. There are horses which turn back toward their masiers and neigh unhappily. There are men who weep when they have to separate from their horse. It was not a man he was leaving, but the animal had been so united to him, so much a part of himself, that as he thought of it the word friend came to his mind. But difficulties had arisen, those insurmountable walls that set limits to the activity of every living creature; it was the parting of the ways and the life of each was now different. The horse could not go into the jungle. Augusto could. The bay did not neigh, but its small, tough body twitched nervously at Augusto's friendly pats and it looked at the boy with its gentle, dark eyes. When the new owner pulled at the halter, it drew back unwillingly, and turned toward Augusto as though asking him to do something. Finally, at the crack of the whip, with an air of sorrowful resignation, the horse set off at a slow, reluctant pace. The boy did not cry, probably because Don Renato, the labor boss was there. He had been saying to him all the way from Cajamarca, where he advanced him three hundred soles, that it takes a heart of steel for the jungle.

Another overwhelming emotion was the loss of the hills and the presence of so much lush green growth. Little by little he left behind him the peaks, the sierras, the hills, the foothills, the slopes. Even the stones were left behind. And in their place were the plants. The grass became bushes, the bush, underbrush, the underbrush, thicket, and the thicket, jungle. Augusto kept turning to look back as he realized

that he was sinking into a deep cavern. Far away in the distance rose a broken line of blue mountains. That had been his world. Now the forest swayed ahead of him, over him, a new world Augusto knew nothing about.

The third powerful emotion was the sight of their pack bearers. When the forest began, the mule drivers that Don Renato had hired turned back with their mules, and an advance guard of rubber gatherers came up driving before them ten wild Indians who were to carry the supplies: arms, canned goods, clothing, axes. With the strength and resignation of animals, and with their endurance too—for only occasionally did they let out a groan—they loaded the bundles on their backs and started off. The tunnel of a miry trail disappeared into the jungle, roofed over with boughs, and walled in by tree trunks and lianas. The Indians walked ahead, and behind them came Don Renato, the boys he had hired, among whom was Augusto, and the rubber gatherers. It was afternoon but it seemed like night already. Occasionally the sun filtered through and it was like a flash of lightning that blinded the eyes. Every step made a pool in the boggy ground. The walkers splashed slowly and monotonously along. They were walking in Indian file, and each one saw ahead of him only the back of the man in front of him, a few tree trunks, and, farther on, darkness. They seemed to be advancing toward the night. Don Renato, himself, feeling, no doubt, all the dramatic suggestiveness of the Amazon forest, spoke up and said:

"Boys, we're in the jungle." It was true.

And Augusto's soul superimposed in a single emotion his horse, the disappearance of the hills, the haunting omnipresence of the trees, and the backs of the Indians bent under the load. Marguicha rose up in a special place in his thoughts, triumphing over everything else. The mud was up to their knees but it was slowly getting softer and deeper.

One of the Indian porters at the head called back:

"Much deep."

One of the gatherers advanced clinging to the trunks of the trees. Augusto could not see well.

So they kept on, sinking into the watery mud to their waists and then to their armpits. The faces and long hair of the porters, bent under their loads, were covered with mud. Behind, those who had guns carried them high above their heads with both arms. On both sides of

the trail, by the feeble light that percolated through the roof of branches, they could see the water surrounding the centuries-old tree trunks until it was lost in the distant darkness. When the mud had once more receded to their knees, Don Renato said:

"In that pool we just came through they say there are two man-eating alligators. To tell you the truth, I've never seen them."

"They invent lots of man-eating alligators," growled one of the rubber gatherers.

They camped for the night on the banks of a little stream. They could still catch a glimpse of the red and violet sunset above the sinuous outlines of the jungle which had replaced the angular profile of the mountains. They washed off the mud in the sluggish stream. Night shrouded the low, intensely black sky in which huge, near-by stars palpitated. The rubber gatherers ate around the camp fire—Augusto and the other new hands formed part of them now—and farther off, beside the river, forming a silent, mournful group, sat the Indian porters. Some of them wore a gray tunic, others, only a pair of pants. The light of the fire revealed the open sores on their bronzed torsos rubbed by the ropes and the rough edges of their loads. The festering wounds smelled badly and their bodies gave off the reek of sweating animals.

It did not look as though it would rain. The porters stretched out on the sand and the others, on their blankets. The fire died out and the glowworms emitted their thread of light. Wild animals and birds could be heard in the jungle. One of the experienced gatherers advised Augusto not to turn over, otherwise the mold he had made where he lay in the sand would make his body ache if he changed positions. He had to learn new things. But everything seemed so insignificant in the face of the myriad noises and sounds from the distant, mysterious bowels of the forest. The river flowed gently along under the night. Malicious mosquitoes blew a faint clarion on their trumpets. The gigantic trees reached the heavens and flowered with stars.

In spite of everything, the tunneled trail was still a pathway of the earth, a link with the world left behind. But in the canoe, in the middle of a swift stream, Augusto Maqui felt that he was really entering on a new existence. The long narrow boats, loaded with men and bundles, moved along one after the other. Some of them had a

little canopy of palm leaves. When the river plunged down a rapid, it seemed as if they were going to founder. But there stood the Indian rowers, leaning over the water with a large paddle in their hands, giving the necessary strokes to guide the boat between the rocks and the currents as naturally as a fish that might have wanted to swim on the surface of the water. Trees and more trees, in every shade of green, grew down to the banks. There was nothing but water before them and behind them. Above, the milky-blue sky was clouding over.

Occasionally, on a sandspit an alligator could be seen sunning itself. As soon as it saw the boats it would plunge into the water with a violent splash. Gray cranes and bands of green parrots and unknown birds flew by screaming at the travelers. The Indian boatmen were tireless, and, helped by the current, the canoes flew along leaving a rapid wake behind them, making for a port which it seemed they would never reach.

The river rushed along, rippling, forming backwaters, growing where its tributaries poured in, cutting away bends, loosening and felling trees, bathing broad beaches of white sand, thundering over the rocky narrows, and, in places, spreading out like a peaceful lake, and again, raging in huge waves and greedy whirlpools. In spite of the width of the river one could see across from one bank to the other, but it gave the impression of being interminably long. There came a moment when they let it go on alone. The canoes turned up a tributary, and after two hours of rowing they drew in at the post Canuco.

A person only really comes to know the jungle after he has left the pathway and entered into this vegetable kingdom, where the only trail is the one he makes, and which will soon be obliterated by the falling leaves. Then is when he feels the tentacle-like embrace of the forest, which he must resist with a steady back, a sure foot, a strong arm, and a clear eye. Otherwise he is in danger of death every minute, either swiftly at the hands of savages or wild animals, or slowly after twisting and turning in that endless maze of trunks, lianas, creepers, ferns, roots, and plants that die and plants that grow, spring up, and wither, and twist about one another, climbing upward. Some raise their arms reaching for the sun which bathes the lofty foliage. Others have become resigned to never seeing it and they wrap themselves frantically around the vigorous trunks to suck up their sap. The lianas and other creepers weave great webs, and the palm trees lend a touch of grace to this vast, congested world.

There are so many palms, so many that no naturalist has come to know them all. Feminine and graceful, alongside the great frowning trees, the thick sedges, or the tormented and tormenting parasite growths, they raise their friendly crests and call to man to offer him coconuts, their fleshy, succulent heart, a resilient fiber to make hammocks of, the leaf from which the hats of the region are woven, and, finally, the supreme gift of guiding the traveler if he has lost his way. They bend their heads toward the sun and follow it from the time it rises until it sets—no matter how much dense foliage there may be above them. The lost traveler—if he understands their gesture—can take the right direction and find his way out of the fathomless ocean. The palm tree is the needle that points toward the lodestar of the jungle: the sun.

Augusto Maqui, the rubber gatherer of Canuco post, entered the jungle with many others, but his closest companion was an old hand by the name of Carmona. He said to Augusto:

"You will lose your fear of the jungle the day you go ten miles in, away from the trail and the signs cut on the trees, and find your way out again."

For the moment Augusto knew he was unequal to such an exploit. He tripped over the tree roots, and the creepers and branches hit him in the face. He could scarcely see.

"Do you know the rubber tree?" asked Carmona.

They stopped before a tortured dweller of the forest. Its trunk was covered with cuts and scars. The slashes had lacerated its smooth, soft bark, and it had bled to death. Man bled here, too, the civilized man and the savage. Augusto Maqui, who had had occasion to see what happened at Canuco, saw a suffering brother in this plant. Yet he must be pitiless. Soon after they found a tree that was intact as yet, and the veteran and the novice gashed the warm skin with the sharp edge of their hatchets and fastened tin holders under it to catch the thick sap. They could not waste the time waiting for it to fill up and they went on. They would gather up the liquid on their way back.

The forest grew and grew before the feet of Augusto Maqui and his companion. And when the day was done they returned with their task completed. The only rubber tree they found was the one they had condemned to death, which yielded up its share. Several shacks built of palm trunks on a cleared field formed Canuco post. In one lived Don Renato and the assistant manager, Custodio Ordoñez. In another

lived the rubber gatherers who were more or less free and who were in charge of the wild Indians and the hands. In the others lived the Indians of the jungle and of the mountains, or, to be more exact, the poor, for there were whites and half-breeds among them. The floors of the shacks were built over thick columns of logs to keep out the dampness of the lowlands of the Amazon. There was a special house for the women, many Indian women, the concubines of Don Renato, Ordoñez, and the overseers. From the depths of the forest they brought young Indian girls to suffer anguish in the arms of these hard, despotic men, violent and lascivious.

Ordoñez was a tall, muscular fellow, with light eyes and a thin face, which his pointed beard made look longer than it really was. He wore a broad, palm-leaf hat, a yellow shirt, and heavy pants. His thick shoes had silver buckles on them. A revolver always hung from his belt and he sometimes carried a rifle over his shoulder. Don Renato was the owner and manager of Canuco post, but as Ordoñez was the more violent of the two, in this world of violence he was, in reality, the manager.

It was not only the men at Canuco who gathered the rubber in that region. The Indians who lived in the jungle had to bring in their quota of it every Saturday. They were really slaves working for the rubber gatherers. They had subdued them by the whip and the gun. And the Indians had stopped hunting, had stopped planting, had stopped weaving, to be able to fulfill their obligations. From morning till afternoon on Saturday they came in from all parts of the territory where the tribe lived—the men, the women, the children—carrying their black balls of rubber. They were the color of copper, their hair was long and tangled, some wore gray tunics, others were naked. The rubber gatherers took what they had brought, and those who had not brought enough were whipped. They tied them to a tree and gave them fifty or a hundred lashes. Even the children were whipped, and the mothers, to hush their crying, blew on them and licked their burning, bleeding buttocks. The rumps of all the Indians were scarred.

Ordoñez shouted at them:

"You lazy Indians. If you keep on reducing the amount of rubber you bring in, I'm not going to whip you. I'm going to kill you."

The battle had been going on since remote times. There is one story that is worth telling.

It was the year 1866. One of the last days of June the wheel of a river

steamer churned up the waters of the Ucayali River for the first time. The Putumayo left Iquitos on one of the first explorations organized by the Navy Department. The paddles splashed uneasily in the strange waters. On both sides the jungle. Many branches, many tributaries, and occasionally the house of one of the first settlers—intrepid people who had come to wrest supremacy from Nature and the wild Indians and clear a path for themselves, stubbornly, with ax and gun. In those days they dealt in wood, skins, and the produce of the land. The industrial uses of rubber had not yet been discovered.

By August the persistent boat, which had struck many floating logs, was ascending the Pachitea River. The settlers were becoming rare. The members of the crew had to cut wood for the boilers. The thick, heavy tree trunks, floating half-submerged in the water, hit against the boat, making it shiver. They put on more steam, the wheels turned faster, and the Putumayo kept on upstream. A powerful current hurled the vessel into a log jam that had formed in a bend of the river. The head of steam was increased, but to no avail; the imprisoned boat could barely move between the logs hugging its sides. The sailors had to get out with their axes and cut away the logs, slowly breaking up the barrier and letting the trunks float down the stream. After working all day they got the Putumayo free. Men who have to fight the jungle are not easily discouraged. They kept on. But the jungle does not give up either. The next day an enormous log hit the steamer and tore a hole in it, and the water flooded both sides of the stern. They had to run it aground on the first sandbank to keep it from sinking. While the boat was being repaired the leader of the expedition went to the mouth of the Pachitea for provisions.

On the fourteenth, four Cashibos appeared on the bank making friendly gestures and signs to the members of the expedition. They were naked, tall, and strong, and carried spears. The other tribes were afraid of the Cashibos and none of them had ever defeated them in war. But the civilized men could not show fear. They launched a boat and the officers Tavara and West and several sailors got into it. The Cashibos received them warmly and invited them to go with them. Tavara and West followed them up the sandy beach. Suddenly, from the trees along the bank, flew thousands of swift arrows, and the officers fell to the ground, their bodies bristling with the shafts. The four Cashibos turned and plunged their spears into their breasts. The sailors had pulled their boat up on the beach, and without waiting to push it back, they flung themselves into the water and managed to swim to the Putumayo. The Indians picked up the dead men and went off into the forest. The Putumayo returned to Iquitos. The Cashibos thought they had won the match.

And now three boats, the Morona, the Napi, and the Putumayo, steamed into the winding Ucayali on their way from Iquitos. The sight of the Cauchahuaya range made a great impression simply because it was stone. Many of the members of the expedition were seeing stone for the first time in years. Others, such big ones, for the first time in their life. On the lowlands of the Amazon stones are almost unknown. These rocks of Cauchahuaya are nothing unusual or attractive; they are simply stones in a world of earth, plants, and water. For this reason they become precious stones.

The steamers entered the Pachitea. The fierce Cashibos lived on the right bank. The leader of the expedition, Prefect Arana, sent out some Conibo Indians to find several of the gentle Cashibos that live on the left bank. Finally they all made camp on Setico Island, three miles below Chonta Island, the place where the dramatic incident had taken place, so that the savages would not hear the noise of the steamers and take precautions.

The next day the expedition set out in boats and canoes handled by Indians who had been converted, and it was late one hot purplish afternoon when they reached Chonta Island. The Indians told them that the men they were looking for lived about five miles down and that their chief was fierce Yanacuna. It seemed better to slip up on them at night and take them prisoners.

And they entered the jungle: armed soldiers; forty Indians, some of them Cashibo guides and the rest Conibos, armed with arrows and thirsting to avenge old defeats; Prefect Arana with a retinue of ten men carrying shotguns, and the Reverend Calvo, who was carrying the cross.

Guided by the Indians, whose eyes could pierce the darkness, they walked all night without encountering anything but trees and pathways obstructed by sharp pegs of chonta palm, which the Indians had driven into the ground to lacerate the feet of their enemies. At four o'clock in the morning they discovered the boat the sailors had left on the beach, and they were amazed to see that the savages had been able to transport such a large heavy boat to this distant spot through the tangled jungle. It was day when they finally reached a group of houses. They were completely empty.

Forward!

They crossed a broad grove of bananas, and were in the jungle once more. There they found some strange huts, very low and long, covered

with palm leaves, and full of small loopholes. The Cashibos used them for hunting. They know how to imitate the cries of birds and animals very well, and hidden in these huts they would make a noise like the deer or the dove or wild turkey, which would come to look for their fellow animals until a swift arrow from one of the loopholes ended their days. But there was nobody here, either, and no fresh signs of Indians anywhere.

Suddenly they heard the beat of a drum, and guiding themselves by it they came to a clearing in the forest where forty or fifty Indians, with their wives and children, were holding an orgy. They were drinking rice wine and dancing about the camp fire. In their war rites the Cashibos burn the corpses of their enemies and then dissolve the ashes in wine and drink it. The bodies of Tavara and West had probably suffered this same fate. This was apparently the conclusion of the celebration.

There was a skirmish and the Indians fled, leaving several dead and three women and fourteen children prisoners. One of the women was the wife of Yanacuna himself. She insulted her captors with shouts and gestures, and pulled from her neck a string of charred teeth which she threw at the feet of the leader of the expedition. The party started back and had not traveled more than a couple of miles when fierce shouts indicated that the Indians were again at hand. The latter began to shoot arrows at them, trying to hem them in, to get the prisoners away from them. Many Indians were killed because of their recklessness, but this, instead of deterring the others, seemed to excite their bravery and their thirst for revenge. Yanacuna ran forward, backward, shouting, shooting arrows, encouraging his followers. He was just about to shoot a soldier point-blank when he dropped with a bullet through his forehead. Even this did not discourage the warriors. The death of their leader infuriated them and they attacked with redoubled intensity, but the rifles and shotguns held them at bay, and the expedition moved on leaving a trail and blood and corpses behind.

At five that afternoon Arana and his men came out at Chonta Island. All day long Cashibos had been gathering there and the beach swarmed with naked men, whose expression was ferocious and whose arrows were swift. But the three steamers had arrived, too, for they had orders to wait for the expeditionary party at this point. The Indians, who knew nothing about artillery, were sure of their prey. The members of the party could not get by. The boats lined up and, at the very moment when the Indians were about to dart a thousand arrows into each of their enemies, the cannons all roared at once and the echoes and the next broadside reverberated through the jungle

like thunder. That dense crowd was mowed down by the grapeshot, and the surviving Cashibos fled to the woods, howling, over the mangled corpses, the wounded who lay writhing, and the blood-soaked sand.

The expedition named the place Port of Punishment and reaffirmed its will to mastery by sailing up the Pachitea.

With this and other similar episodes the conquest of the jungle began. It went on when the demand for rubber reached its zenith. It is not yet finished. In the search for rubber thousands of determined men had penetrated the forest. They had both greed and bravery, and they were spurred on and vitiated to the point of barbarity in a world where the law was written by the barrel of a gun. Many savage tribes kept up a resistance and were pitilessly massacred. The peaceful ones who yielded received more or less the same treatment. And to add insult to injury they had to bear the burdens. But this was more than they could stand and they sometimes rose in an attempt to shake them off.

Every day fewer Indians came to Canuco with rubber. Don Renato decided to leave and handed over the post, and, of course, the men, each with his debt, to Custodio Ordonez. To no avail Augusto begged to be allowed to leave. He owed a hundred soles and he had to stay. More than a prisoner of man, he felt himself the prisoner of the jungle. It was very hard to escape through the forest without getting lost, and to go by water one had to have a canoe and experience with the rapids. Life in Canuco was dull and hard. Behind the shacks lay the jungle, in front of them the river, and on the other bank the jungle began again. Overhead, the sky, either heavy with clouds or ablaze with the scorching sun.

Once a fortnight or every month a launch came from Iquitos, bringing supplies and news and carrying back rubber. It was the rubber gatherers' only contact with the world. It also brought whisky and the bosses got drunk, especially Ordonez. He would shoot up the place, firing in all directions, and would alternately love and torture a fifteen-year-old Indian girl called Maibi.

The river rose with the great storms and then receded to its normal channel, leaving wide sand beaches where the turtles laid their eggs. Sometimes a huge tree fell, struck by lightning, and then ten started climbing toward the sun in its place. The jungle is immortal with its inexhaustible fertility, its generative warmth, its abundant rain, and its dazzling sun. Looking at it, it is evident that life does not lie in the

root or in the fruit, but in its essential forces.

Augusto penetrated ever deeper into the forest, but always with Carmona. Little by little he acquired more self-confidence, but the mysterious impression the jungle produced in him never lessened. It seemed to him that just ahead of where they were, just beyond, lay some disturbing secret. Carmona said it was always like that, and even the most experienced gatherers and the Indians themselves were wary of being left alone deep in the jungle. And not because of wild animals or savages, but because of the terrifying call of the unknown.

In the quiet of the forest Augusto saw many birds. He was surprised by the strangeness of the huancari, a brave hunter of poisonous snakes, and by the kingfisher, which feeds on fish. Sitting on a branch that overhangs the water, it lets its droppings, which contain seeds, fall in as bait, and then plunges in and brings out the fish in its beak the minute it comes near. He used to watch the toucan shake the leaves shaped like a chalice to get the water out of them into its thick, coarse beak, or, when it rains, stand with its bill open, because it cannot drink any other way; and the mariguinas, with their sweet, merry song, that fly in flocks along the riverbank. These were the most visible. The others lived in the high, sunlit foliage of the jungles and, once in a while, flitted before the rubber gatherers like a wisp of fire or gold or emerald or snow. But their gay chirping told of their presence.

And one night when an ayaymama was singing near Canuco a rubber gatherer told one of the many legends about it. Because in the depths of the tropical forest, while the moon silvers the tops of the immense trees and the waters of the vast rivers, the ayaymama sings long and mournfully. It seems to say, "Ay, ay, mama!" It is a bird nobody has ever seen and is known only by its song. All this comes from an evil spell cast by Chullachagui. This is how it happened.

Long ago, a very long time ago on the banks of a river that flowed into the Napo—which is a river that winds through the jungle and empties

into the Amazon—lived the Secoya Indians whose chief was Coranke. Like all the natives he had a cabin of palm-tree trunks, thatched over with leaves from the same plant. There he stayed with his wife, who was called Nara, and their little daughter. Yet to say he stayed there is just a manner of speaking, for Coranke was almost never at home. He was a strong, brave man who was always in the heart of the jungle engaged in fighting or hunting. Wherever he turned his eye there his arrow flew, and he brandished his wooden club with a strength nobody could equal. Wild turkeys, tapirs, and deer fell, pierced through, and more than one jaguar, trying to spring on him by surprise, dropped to the ground, its skull crushed with a blow from his club. His enemies fled from him.

Nara was as beautiful and industrious as Coranke was strong and brave. Her eyes were deep like the river, her lips were red like ripe fruits, her hair was black as a raven's wing, and her skin was as smooth as cedar wood. She could weave cotton into tunics and blankets, and plait hammocks from the fiber of the shambira palm, which is very elastic, and mold pots and water jugs from clay, and cultivate the garden that lay beside the cabin where corn, yuccas, and bananas flourished.

The little daughter, who was still very small, had Coranke's strength and Nara's beauty, and was like a beautiful jungle flower.

But at this point Chullachaqui had to begin his meddling. He is the evil spirit of the forest, who looks like a man except for the fact that one of his feet is the hoof of a goat or a deer. There is no more perverse creature living. He is the scourge of the natives as well as of the white men who go into the jungle to cut mahogany or cedar, or to hunt lizards and anacondas for their skin, or to gather rubber. Chullachaqui drowns them in swamps or rivers, makes them lose their way in the maze of the forest, or attacks them in the shape of wild animals. It is bad to cross his path, but it is worse if he crosses yours.

One day Chullachaqui happened to be passing in the neighborhood of the chief's cabin and saw Nara. To see her and fall in love with her was all one. And as he can take the form of any animal that he wants to, sometimes he changed himself into a bird and at others, into an insect, so as to be near her and to be able to look at her as much as he wanted to without frightening her.

But soon he tired of this and wanted to take Nara away with him. So he went into the forest, changed himself back to his own shape, and so as not to appear before her naked, he lay in wait for a poor Indian

who was hunting there, killed him, and stole his tunic which was long and covered up his goat foot. Disguised this way he went to the river and took a canoe which a boy, who had been sent by his parents to gather some healing herbs, had left on the bank. He is so wicked that he did not mind killing the Indian in the forest nor leaving the boy there in the jungle with no way to get home. He rowed along till he came to the chief's house which was on one of the riverbanks.

"Nara, beautiful Nara, wife of Chief Coranke," he said as he drew in, "I am a hungry traveler. Give me food. . . ."

Beautiful Nara filled half a gourd shell with yuccas and sweet corn and bananas. Sitting at the door of the cabin Chullachagui ate slowly, looking at Nara, and then said:

"Beautiful Nara, I am not a hungry traveler, as you think, and I have come only because of you. I adore your beauty and I cannot live without it. Come with me!"

Nara answered:

"I cannot leave Chief Coranke."

Then Chullachagui began to plead and weep and weep and plead with Nara to go away with him.

"I will not leave Chief Coranke," said Nara.

Chullachagui went sadly toward the canoe, very sadly got into it, and rowed down the river, disappearing in the distance.

Nara noticed the footprints the visitor had left in the sand on the riverbank, and when she saw that one print was that of a foot and the other of a hoof, she exclaimed:

"That was Chullachagui."

But she did not say anything to Chief Coranke when he came back from his travels, so as not to expose him to the wrath of the evil one.

Six months went by and, late in the afternoon of the last day of the six months, a mighty chief stopped his great canoe in front of the cabin. He wore a rich tunic and his head was adorned with beautiful plumes, and his neck with heavy necklaces.

"Nara, beautiful Nara," he said, coming ashore and showing her a

thousand gifts. "You can see by this that I am powerful. The jungle is my domain. Come with me and it will be yours."

He had brought the most beautiful flowers of the forest, and all the sweetest fruits, and all the most beautiful things—blankets, dishes, hammocks, tunics, necklaces of teeth and of seeds that the different tribes of the jungle make. On one of Chullachaqui's hands sat a white parrot and on the other a wild turkey as black as night.

"I see and know that you are powerful," answered Nara, glancing at his footprints which confirmed her suspicions. "But for nothing in the world will I leave Chief Coranke."

Then Chullachaqui called out and the anaconda came out of the river, and he gave another cry and the jaguar came out of the forest. And to one side of him the anaconda rolled up its huge flexible body, and the jaguar arched its back on the other.

"You see, now," said Chullachaqui, "I am the master of the jungle and of the animals in the jungle. I will kill you if you do not come with me."

"I don't care," answered Nara.

"I will kill Chief Coranke," replied Chullachaqui.

"He would prefer to die," answered Nara.

Then the evil one pondered a moment and said:

"I could take you by force, but I don't want you to be sad with me for that would be unpleasant. I will return, as I have today, in six months, and if you refuse to come with me I will give you a terrible punishment."

The anaconda returned to the river and the jaguar to the jungle, and Chullachaqui went back to the canoe carrying away his gifts, sad, very sad, and got into it and disappeared once more down the river.

When Coranke returned from his hunting Nara told him everything, for she had to, and the chief decided he would stay home at the time Chullachaqui had promised to return, to protect Nara and their daughter.

And so he did. He put a new cord on his bow, sharpened his arrows, and stayed around the cabin. And one day, when Nara was out in the

cornfield, Chullachaqui suddenly appeared before her.

"Come with me," he said. "It is the last time I'm going to ask you. If you don't come I will turn your daughter into a bird who will mourn forever in the forest and will be so timid that nobody can ever see her; for the day she is seen the spell will be broken, and she will resume her human shape... Come, come with me, I am asking you for the last time. If not...

But Nara, mastering the fright the threat had caused her, began to cry out:

"Coranke! Coranke!"

The chief came quickly with drawn bow and swift arrow ready to pierce Chullachagui's heart, but he had already fled into the jungle.

The parents ran to the spot where their little daughter lay sleeping, but the hammock was empty. And out of the rustling depths of the jungle they heard for the first time that mournful cry, "Ay, ay, mama," which gives its name to the enchanted bird.

Nara and Coranke grew old quickly and died from the sorrow of hearing the sad voice of their little daughter who had been changed to a bird so shy it could not even be seen.

The ayaymama still sings, especially on moonlit nights, and the men of the jungle always peer into the thick foliage in the hope of liberating this unfortunate human being. And it is very sad that nobody has yet been able to see it.

Vanilla time came and Augusto realized from the intense odor that there was a large thicket of it at the edge of the jungle, behind the shacks. At first the wind brought an odor of sweet perfume, but then it grew in intensity until it was sickening. It made the head ache and caused nausea. The gnarled vines with their broad leaves were loaded with pods that swayed gently, wafting their heavy aroma through the air. To think that the jungle harassed man with a thing that was sought in the outside world to flavor food and drink for his pleasure! The jungle overdid even its perfumes. Ordonez shouted:

"Cut down those vines."

Ten rubber gatherers, machete in hand, chopped down the vanilla. And green aromatic islands, perfuming the river from bank to bank, floated downstream.

At night Augusto thought of Marguicha. The day was filled with tasks and in the jungle one had to be on the alert every minute; but, curled up in the hammock, listening to the voices of the rubber gatherers, or to the mosquitoes when the voices were silent, he could give free rein to his memories. At first he missed her very much and longed impatiently to return. Afterward, his debts and his hopelessness wrapped themselves about his will like tight lianas, and she had become now only a doubtful promise. What could he do, imprisoned as he was by debt, by the jungle, and by the river? Besides, he did not want to come back defeated. Carmona told him he could change bosses by running away.

When? How? There was the catch. Man cannot live forever in the jungle and when he comes out there are always labor contractors, bosses, overseers who work together.

One afternoon a rubber gatherer came to Canuco in a little canoe. He was called Chino. Without owing anybody anything, he had gone into the jungle and brought his black balls of rubber right down the river. From the canoe, a thrust of the paddle here, a thrust of the paddle there, he guided them. He looked like the shepherd of a strange, aquatic flock. He had lost only two pieces in a bed of reeds. Chino got out his rubber and waited for the arrival of the launch. Ordonez cast covetous glances at the gathered rubber, offered him a ridiculous price for it, and even threatened him. Chino did not sleep that night guarding his treasure, gun in hand, and the next day the launch came. During the night Carmona and Augusto talked with him and he promised to help them get away. When he came back, the next time.

Maibi reminded Augusto of Marguicha. He used to watch her, when Ordonez was not looking, as she went from the cabin where the women lived to that of Ordonez. Sometimes she wore a tunic, sometimes she was naked. Her strong, dark body was beautiful and fresh in spite of the punishment and suffering she endured. Her breasts rose gently; her belly was firm and her hips moved with a soft,

voluptuous rhythm. In her broad face, framed by hair as black as night, shone her great, dark eyes, like those of a startled bird, and her mouth was faintly sad. All the rubber gatherers lusted after her, and probably loved her in their dreams. Their women were ugly, and some had none at all. Carmona and Augusto sometimes found themselves women among the Indians who were searching for rubber in the jungle. But they were not always to be had, and they were scarred from the beatings they received, and sad.

Carmona told him pointedly about the time he was with the gringo McKenzie, who was a missionary to the Aguarunas. Well, McKenzie and Carmona, who was his assistant, were in real danger in the mountains of Cajamarca, where they were almost killed in a town that the priest had aroused by telling them that the gringo was the Antichrist. Fortunately they had good horses and they left, not galloping but flying. The Aguarunas treated McKenzie cordially and listened to the Protestant services he conducted, accepted the gifts he made them, and, above all, they helped him eat up his provisions. They were very devout. Afterward, when rubber became valuable, they defended their lands on the Lower Marañon with arrow and spear. Once they massacred all the men at a gathering post because the boss could not return a sansa, one of those shrunken heads, which was that of one of their chiefs, that they had traded for a rifle and that the boss had sent to Lima. But they had been talking about women. Among the Aguarunas when a man of the tribe steals a woman they punish him with a machete blow on the head. There are Don Juans whose skulls have more furrows than a plowed field. But when it is an outsider they kill him. The worst of it is that the Indians can tell when a woman has been unfaithful by the smell and then the woman has to confess. Carmona once had a woman whom he used to take, by the river, on a bed of palm leaves, which they would afterward throw into the water. Those were the days. Now, in Canuco, the women were all scarred and faded, and Maibi, Maibi. . . .

Ordoñez loved Maibi ferociously. When the launch arrived he would get drunker than anyone else. He would roar like an animal in his cabin, screaming out insults, and then he would send for Maibi or go after her himself. After he had had her he would say:

"You don't love me because you're a whore. I'm going to give you to the rubber gatherers. This time I'm going to fix you. . . ."

He would take her to the edge of the forest and tie her naked to a tree. All night she would be there, at the mercy of the mosquitoes and the thousand other insects of the jungle. In the morning she would be

covered with bites and blood. Then Ordoñez, who had spent the night drinking, would tie a rope around her neck and throw her into the river. Maibi would struggle desperately to keep from going under and to keep the rope from strangling her. The water washed off the blood, and Ordoñez, after he had satisfied his brutality with her terror, would pull her out and say:

"Go along, you bitch. The next time I'm going to kill you."

The girl would go to her hammock and the other women would cover her with poultices of herbs for the insect bites. She neither wept nor complained. It was as though she knew it was useless to struggle against her suffering.

This scene, with slight variations, took place every time Ordoñez got drunk. It was as though the alcohol unleashed in him all the lust and cruelty of the jungle. On one occasion the brute changed his tactics and said to Maibi:

"Now I'm going to let you get so skinny nobody will want you. You're going to see the kind of man I am."

He shut her up in her little room beside the women's cabin, and made them stay outdoors. Nobody was to give her a thing, neither food nor water. Ordoñez stayed drunk, and patrolled the cabin, shooting off his pistol at intervals.

"Anybody I find around here I'll shoot," he shouted.

Augusto felt very sorry for Maibi. On the second night, when Ordoñez had gone back into his cabin for a moment to get a drink, he managed to slip her a jar of water and some bananas. As she took them she said, in a low vibrant voice, like that of the jungle at times, "Good, good boy." On the third day Ordoñez stopped drinking and let her out.

Augusto was left behind at camp to smoke rubber. Sitting beside the fire of smoldering palm leaves he dipped a stick in the pail of sap and then held it over the fire so that the rubber would harden. He would have done his work better if he had not kept watching for Maibi. She looked at him too. Maibi was beautiful. Augusto was kind and strong.

They did not dare look at one another too often, and they would pretend to be watching something else. And sometimes the things they

had to look at were horrible. Rubber was getting scarce and Ordoñez kept demanding more and more. One Saturday afternoon two terrified Indians arrived at the post carrying but one ball of rubber. Those who had arrived earlier had been short on their quota and they had been flogged. But when Ordoñez saw the amount those two were fearfully holding out to him he screamed in exasperated greed:

"Why? You lazy Indians, why?"

His jaw was quivering and his light eyes glittered under the brim of his hat.

"There's no rubber . . . no rubber," repeated the Indians, looking glumly at the jungle. In truth, the supply of rubber trees was being exhausted.

"What do you mean, there's no rubber? It's that you're so lazy. . . ."

Ordoñez pulled out a long, sharp machete, which looked more like a sword, and whirling it toward the one who was closest to him struck off his head at a single blow. The body dropped heavily and the mutilated neck looked like a fountain of blood. The head, too, gushed blood, and before it went dead, the eyes wide in a frenzied stare, the lips twitched horribly as though trying to speak. The other Indians vanished into the forest, and Ordonez, brandishing his machete as if he were looking for another victim, ordered his men:

"Throw the body into the river and stick the head on a stick at the edge of the forest, as an example to slackers."

So they did and the head stayed there, swollen and staring, until the stench became so unbearable that it, too, had to be thrown in the river.

Something tragic and sinister seemed to be crawling through the forest like a snake. Augusto went on smoking rubber, seated at the foot of a tree, and Carmona, back from the forest, came over to him and said:

"This is a fine kettle of fish, I'm telling you. There are hardly any Indians tapping rubber, though you do have to go far out to find trees. I did see one chipping arrowheads, and he told me he was going wild turkey hunting. Wild turkey, hell! You don't need fifty arrowheads to hunt wild turkey. The worst of the whole business is that they know they have to unite to do anything, and they've joined up with a neighboring tribe which knows how to use curare."

Augusto had heard about this poison which paralyzes the nerves. Carmona went on:

"Ordonez knows all about it, because the men at the other posts have told him. But he talks tough and says he just wishes they would start something so he could kill all the rebels himself."

But a closer and more treacherous misfortune was lying in wait for Augusto in the ball of rubber. He had noticed that the rubber sputtered as it came into contact with the fire, and little gouts flew off that made blisters on his hands. But this time, either because he held the ball too low, or because a sudden flame licked up, or because the sap had got mixed with some resinous matter that made it especially inflammable, it blew up, throwing a great mass of bubbling rubber in his face. It was as though daggers had been driven into his eyes and he fell over unconscious. When he came to, screaming with pain, they had thrown water in his face, and had pulled off a kind of mask to which the skin had stuck fast. He could not see, and they covered his face with a poultice of soothing herbs, tying it on with rags. The pain was so terrible he could hardly hear. But, with a great effort, he managed to catch a few words that seemed to come from far away:

"It's not the first time this has happened, and they've done nothing about it."

"They ought to give goggles to the ones who do the smoking."

"What do they care? This is a factory where they turn out blind men."

Blind!

Augusto moaned:

"Am I going to be blind?"

A heavy silence spread over his head, and by straining his ears he could barely catch the distant murmur of the forest. They carried him to his hammock, and he waited anxiously for Carmona to come back. He could no longer tell time by the light; now he was blind. But he wanted to hope, and he felt a vague confidence in what Carmona might say.

"It's too bad. We'll have to wait until your wounds heal to tell. . . ."

"Why didn't you tell me?" sobbed Augusto.

"I should have," Carmona answered sadly, "but we're so tied up that I never stopped to think whether you knew how rubber acts."

The days that followed were miserable and uneasy. An old woman—he knew she was old by her voice—changed his poultices, but, aside from that, nobody paid any attention to him. He ate when Carmona came back from the jungle. Rubber gatherers began to disappear. The Indians probably hunted them down.

One Thursday Carmona did not come back, and then Augusto felt that he was really lost, alone. As he looked back, he realized that the greatest mistake of his life was leaving the community. To be sure, though he had got into debt and lost his freedom, at least he had never been flogged like the other hands, nor had he been sick, and he had even planned to escape with Carmona and Chino. But nobody lives in the jungle without getting scarred by whip, bullet, claw, fang, arrow, rubber. He had been the victim of the rubber, cruelly and fatally. It was no surprise to him when the woman took off the bandages and he stood face to face with darkness.

That Saturday night not a single Indian came with rubber, and Ordonez gave his orders:

"Tomorrow we're going on a punitive expedition."

But that very night the jungle began to reverberate with a deep, angry, majestic drumming. All the forest Indians, including Maibi, had fled from the post. The maquare was calling the tribes to battle as in the olden days. The maquare is a huge drum made of a tree trunk hollowed out by fire and hung between two posts. It is beaten with a heavy mallet. It was probably far away, a long way away, but the powerful drumming carried for miles, and sounded close at hand. Ordonez said:

"We'd better join the men at the Sachauacu post. That's going to be our headquarters."

All the rubber gatherers, down to the lowest helper, gathered their things together as fast as they could, and hurried down to the landing. Augusto screamed in desperation:

"Don't leave me. Take me with you."

But nobody paid any attention to him. They were getting into their canoes. The blind man groped his way out of the cabin and stumbled down the path to the river. Somebody said:

"We're not carrying any dead weight."

The oars splashed in the water and the sound began to die away in the distance. Augusto screamed once more:

"Don't leave me."

But his voice was drowned out by the sonorous sound of the maquare. He felt his way back to the cabin. He finally found his hammock because it was the only one that still swung there. He was afraid and he could not sleep. He, too, was a victim, but the Indians of the jungle did not know that. He had heard that they killed all Indians who could not answer them in their own dialect.

The throbbing of the maquare shook the night.

Many hours had gone by when a low, frightened voice brought him out of his terrified loneliness: "Augusto."

It was Maibi. Augusto gave a joyful cry and held out his hands to her. She told him she had come back because she was sure the Indian tribes would be beaten, just as had happened when she was a little girl, and she didn't want to see them die. She was tired of seeing people killed. Besides, she had felt that she would find Augusto. The boy thought, for the first time, how horrible his face must be, but he stood up and took Maibi in his arms. Fear, misery, and passionate joy were mingled in the long embrace of those two unhappy creatures.

In the forest the next day the majestic beat of the maquare was accompanied by the nervous crackle of guns. First a jaguar, then two deer, and finally a tapir came running through the clearing. They were fleeing from the scene of battle. Maibi told Augusto everything that she saw and he made conjectures about the fight. They might even be using machine guns. He had seen what that was like one day.

Meanwhile, out there, three hundred rubber gatherers who had assembled in Sachauacu were advancing methodically. Another equal number stationed at a farther post was carrying out an enveloping movement. The Indians were going to see what it was like to be caught between two fires. Custodio Ordóñez marched at the head of his men, resolute in his bearing and accurate in his aim, shooting the Indians out of the treetops where they were hidden. The ones that were only wounded he finished off with a blow over the head from his gunstock. The arrows seemed to avoid him until finally one came whizzing along to bury itself in his shoulder. He pulled it out with a violent jerk, looked at it, and screamed:

"Curare, curare . . . Give them something they won't forget."

He fired and tried to fire again, but his hand no longer obeyed him as he tried to push up the bolt of his rifle. He took a few steps, stumbled, and fell. His last words were:

"Go on—kill!"

The rubber gatherers went on and he was left alone. Nearby lay the body of an Indian, his head resting against a tree as though he were asleep. Ordóñez struggled to get up, but his left hand was now numb and he had no control over his legs, as though they did not belong to him. The poison curare was paralyzing his motor nerves. Ordóñez knew this and it filled him with terror and rage to die like this. If he could only smash an Indian's skull or tear out his throat . . . But now his fingers were stiff, so stiff that he could not pinch his body to see if it, too, was getting numb. Yes, it must be, for it was hard to breathe and his mind was getting foggy and shadows were beginning to float before him. The forest took on strange shapes before his dimming eyes; the trees seemed to twist and bend, curling and uncurling about one another as though they were huge, flexible serpents. The shadows were growing, and though he strained his pupils as wide as he could, there was only darkness, darkness. . . .

Ordóñez lost consciousness. His lungs were paralyzed and he quickly choked to death with panting gasps. His face was purplish, almost black. He lay at the feet of the jungle, overcome by its death-dealing power.

For three days the noise lasted. Finally the maguare stopped and the gunfire became more infrequent. Maibi and Augusto understood that the Indians had lost, otherwise the drumming would have gone on, and the surviving rubber gatherers would have been escaping downstream. They could hear new and intermittent gunfire. Those would be firing squads. And yet around Canuco post the forest lay in peaceful silence. But this was misleading. Since the beginning of time quiet and peace have enveloped the great dramas of the Amazon.

The next day the rubber gatherers of Canuco returned to the post. The principal figures had been killed, and the survivors brought back more than thirty women prisoners. According to their story they had shot or beheaded the more important Indian headmen and the others had to agree to bring in rubber even if they sweated blood to get it. Ordonez's death had set the men free from debt, and they were all satisfied, though worn out by the fight.

As there were more than enough young women they left Maibi to Augusto. And time went by and work became hard and cruel again. The law of the strongest is the law of the jungle. At Canuco a struggle for leadership began, and new Ordonezes rose up to confront the furious impotence of their rivals and the shattered hearts of the Indians.

Maibi and Augusto went to live in a cabin near the edge of the forest. She cultivated a patch of yuccas and bananas. The blind man wove hammocks and mats of palm leaf which he sold, or traded for things they needed, to the men of the launch.

In the still nights, while the huge moon of the tropics rolled slowly through the sky, over forest and rivers, Maibi told her husband simple tales or sang him sweet songs. As he listened to her Augusto thought of the enchanted bird that sings in the night. Maibi, too, was like an invisible bird that sang in the night. His night.

Part Four

12

Rosendo Maqui in Prison

The old mayor did not lose heart. There seemed to be something inside him that kept up the struggle. Perhaps in his veins flowed the blood of some unconquerable exiled mitimae from the times of the Incas, but the fact is that every day he drew new strength from the earth. Like the great birds of the altitudes he had always loved the mountain peaks. Now, even his will to sow and for life that was enduring affirmed itself there with tenacity. There might not be much of a potato crop, but the quinua, the barley, the ocas and the ollucos were not bad. Two children were born in the village and they named them Indalecio and German. A little calf was born and in a few days it started to frisk about, happy to be alive: this was the only land it had ever known and it found it fine. Rosendo thought the same thing would happen with the children. As they grew up they would not think about what had been, and under the guidance of wise natural forces they would accept their existence as a matter of course. The people would be made of rock.

Little by little the community, too, adjusted itself to the new life. Nobody thought any more about leaving unless things should become unbearable. The dark, blinding pessimism of the first days had worn off and they were willing to admit that it might be bad to rush into decisions. The soundness of this point of view was confirmed when, after two months, the mason Pedro Mayta returned with his wife and four children. In spite of the fact that he had a trade, he had had a bad time and he told of many sorrows that he had suffered or seen. You had to know the work on the ranches at firsthand to realize how miserable it was. It was not only the way you had to work; it was the way you were treated. The poor farm workers seemed to be used to it and, besides, their debts made it impossible for them to get away. Mayta had spent all he had, but had turned back before he got into debt. The families of the other villagers who had migrated came to ask him about them. What luck had they had? Mayta did not know.

Rosendo Maqui sat beside the quinua field, looking out over the purple plants. It looked fine even though the rainstorm had washed a gulley through it. The plants rose impetuously from the earth which

was hoed up the full length of the furrow. The bright, intense lavender drew the eye and rejoiced the heart. The wind beat against the quinua and blew them about, but it could not break them. Rosendo compared them to the community. He looked at his worn sandals and thought of their poverty. They had no leather and no money with which to buy it. The community had spent over a thousand soles on stamped paper, lawyer, and judicial proceedings. At the end Rosendo had to use his own money, though he never told anybody about it lest they would think he was trying to insure his re-election. The council of selectmen had decided to use the twenty soles Augusto had given for the bay to fix up Saint Isidore.

It was out of the question to think of killing a cow for the sake of the skin. The herd had been decimated. On the contrary, the next day he had to go to Umay to get back the work bull that had been picked up in an unexpected roundup Don Alvaro had ordered. He would have to talk with the rancher. What would he say to him? The mayor prepared himself to oppose, politely but firmly, any possible suggestion that the villagers should go to work in the mine, where, according to reports, all preparations were now complete. Rosendo would claim his bull, as was fitting. They had already lost several milch cows, two oxen, and now a bull. It was his duty to get it back, especially since it was a work animal. How could they cultivate their land on the necessary scale without work animals?

That was why the next day Rosendo went to Umay accompanied by Artidoro Oteiza, the selectman who was in charge of the cattle. He left him at the entrance saying:

"You stay here so you can let them know if anything happens to me."

Rosendo looked inquisitively around the barn lots. There was a smell of cow dung and sweat. The cows were milling about, lunging at one another, some were bleeding where they had been gored. He finally recognized the black bull, over in a corner, with its down-pointing horns and the hunger of the days of the roundup showing in its sharp ribs. There was a lot of stock from Muncha. The overseers were heating the Umay brand and the visitor said to them:

"That black bull belongs to the community."

"Bah, Don Alvaro says it belongs to the ranch, that he bought it from Casimiro Rosas."

Rosendo grew indignant.

"Who doesn't know the Rumi brand? There it is!"

"Maybe, but that's what he says. Casimiro is the father of one of the herders."

Rosendo went on:

"I don't know anything about that. All I know is that the bull belongs to the community."

"Maybe, but Don Alvaro said we were to put the Umay brand on it."

Rosendo argued on:

"No, you can't put that brand on it."

And the overseers answered indifferently:

"Well, go tell him about it."

It made Rosendo suffer to see their indifference toward a matter that concerned the community. He would have liked to see the overseers side with him, if only in their words, and to feel that there was a bond between the Indians and the poor. He despised them in his heart and went to look for the rancher.

Don Alvaro, immaculately dressed in white, was standing at the door of his office talking with some men from Muncha who had come for their stock. It seemed to Rosendo that he looked more insolent and arrogant than ever, with his haughty eyes, his pointed black mustache, his pale, self-satisfied face, his tall body, and the imperious gestures of his hands.

"I have held this roundup," said Don Alvaro to the men from Muncha, "to cure you of your tricks. In the pastures of Rumi you raise more stock than appears at the yearly roundups, for you take them away before the time comes. Now, you will have to pay a fine of ten soles for every cow of yours that I have picked up."

"Sir, I—"

"Sir, you have ten cows of mine, that's awfully dear—"

"That's no affair of mine. Either you pay or my brand goes on them. I am sick and tired of being robbed."

The men from Muncha had to pay up, some for their own cattle,

others for that of their relatives or friends. There were a hundred head of cattle there and Don Alvaro collected over a thousand soles. It was a profitable roundup. Rosendo had the satisfaction of seeing a relative of Zenobio Garcia's among the mournful debtors. He made his way to the rancher, greeted him, and said:

"Sir, I have come for my black bull."

Don Alvaro, who had a silver-handled quirt hanging from his wrist, answered angrily that it belonged to the ranch.

"Sir, it has the Rumi brand."

"What brand? How dare you? That's the brand of Casimiro Rosas, I bought it from him."

"Don Alvaro, have pity, we need that bull to work. . . ."

Don Alvaro flew into a rage. An overseer stood expectantly nearby, with the air of a bulldog waiting to be set on his victim.

"Sir, I will give you one or two cows. . . ."

The rancher began lashing at him with the quirt and punching him.

"Don't bother me any more, you son-of-a-bitch Indian."

Rosendo left, dripping blood from his nose and mouth, from his noble old face which to his people had always been the mirror of justice and peace. Oteiza looked at him without speaking one word, and the mayor passed him by and kept walking until he came to a ditch where he knelt down and washed. The blood colored the water red. Oteiza had followed him, leading the horses and feeling an anguish that seemed to throttle him. The kneeling, bleeding old man seemed a symbol of their people. Better to die. Rosendo washed himself with hands that were trembling, then slowly got to his feet and mounted his horse, aided by the selectman. After a long time he spoke:

"What do you think of this, Artidoro?"

"What can I think, father? This Don Alvaro is a dog who doesn't respect even age. If I didn't know they would stop me before I could get near him I'd split him open with my knife."

"And what about the bull?"

"I'm afraid he's lost. Unless we get him away at night."

"That was what I was thinking."

The men from Muncha were halfway up the hill driving their stock before them. Rosendo and the selectman were just starting up. In a few moments, as they ascended, they saw the herders driving the cows into a nearby pasture lot, for it was too late for them to take them any further. They had probably already branded the bull and who knows how many other head. The black bull would be invisible in the darkness. Rosendo and Artidoro rode into a pass to wait for the night. It was late when they came out riding back toward the pampa where the plain began. Rosendo said once more to the selectman:

"You stay here, so you can give the word."

"No, father, now it's my turn."

"You are young and I am old: the community needs you."

"No, father, who will give us good advice if anything happens to you?"

"Advice! Advice is no good against wickedness. You stay here and do as I say, for I'm the mayor and you're the selectman...."

Rosendo started his horse off at a walk and disappeared slowly into the darkness of the night. He was afraid he might find the gate padlocked, but it was just bolted. He got off and, with great care so it should not make a noise, he slid out the long iron bolt and opened the gate. The pasture was thick and the cattle were grazing quietly. Some were lying down. He found the bull who let himself be roped without the least trouble. Rosendo looked him over carefully after he had caught him, to be sure he had not made a mistake. It was him all right, sleek and contented, with his heavy neck and his short horns.

Rosendo left the pasture lot with his animal and was closing the gate after him. Everything was working out well. Getting on the horse would not be so easy. What a handicap it was to be old! Finally he managed, and just as he was going to ride off, a voice rang out:

"Halt!"

Two armed men came over to him, calling him a thief, as they took his horse by the bridle. Rosendo was led to the ranch house and shut up in a cell.

Oteiza waited a long time and then made his way to the pasture gate. There was no doubt that Rosendo had been caught. Should he go to

the house? It would not help any if they were both taken. With great sorrow, for he could foresee disaster, he started back to the village.

Amenabar gave careful thought to what he should do with Rosendo. What the rancher wanted to do was kill him. As often happens with those who are ambitious and take to the law, he had convinced himself that he was right and he hated everybody who interfered with his plans. In his bolder moments he would cynically boast about his victories, but it was more usual for him to fool himself and at the same time try to fool other people. Yet, at the same time, he remembered the falling stone, Fiero Vasquez's band, his wife's nervousness, the frightened faces of his daughters. He would not kill Rosendo. Jail is another way of getting rid of people. Without losing time he called an overseer and sent him off with a note. He was asking the subprefect to send two troopers for a cattle thief he had caught.

The prison courtyard was wide and was bordered by dusty galleries on which the blocks of cells opened. When Rosendo, surrounded by troopers, came through the entrance, a voice behind him spoke up:

"Put him in cell two. He is dangerous."

Each block was divided up into cells. They put him in number 2. The door was small and made of thick wood, and there was a little barred window. The troopers went over him carefully to see if he had a weapon concealed in his clothing, and then examined his saddlebag, his blankets, his poncho.

"You're in a fine fix, old man!"

They walked out banging the door shut and fastening it on the outside with a strong padlock.

Rosendo went over to the window where he could hear the voices of Abram Maqui, Juanacha, Goyo Auca, and the other villagers. They were asking permission to talk with Rosendo to find out if he needed anything. The keeper told them to come back on Sunday, which was visiting day, and the voices died away after pleading a little longer.

Notified by Oteiza, the villagers had gone to see Rosendo, following him to the town, out of respect and affection, and also because it is the custom of Indians to follow their prisoners along the road. There have been cases where the police, either on orders from higher up or

bribed by enemies of the prisoner, have killed prisoners, alleging that they had attempted to escape. When he got down at the prison door Rosendo had no time to say goodbye for he was immediately pushed inside. He did not really need anything. He had the most necessary things which Juanacha had brought along. But he would have liked to say something to them. He was very much moved. As they had so few horses, some of the villagers had followed him on foot.

He could not hear words any more, only voices that were strange to his heart: meaningless noises. He could see part of the dusty gallery, a column painted blue, a patch of cobbled courtyard, another column, another part of the gallery at the foot of a white wall. He looked over his cell again. There was nothing there except the four walls and a door. All this was very simple and yet all this was prison, misfortune.

An old man with a hooked nose who said he was the jailer appeared between the bars.

"You are incommunicado."

"What is that?"

"You can't talk to anybody until you've appeared before the judge."

"And how am I to get anything to eat?"

"That's a different matter. I'm going to send a keeper to fix that up for you."

"Send him soon, please."

Rosendo, to have something to do, started to make up his bed with his blankets and ponchos. Then he renewed his wad of coca and stood up at the window again. There was little he could see, that was a fact. Suddenly he heard a voice and it was as though it came from the gallery, the walls, out of space:

"Rosendo, Rosendo Maqui. . . ."

The voice was purposely kept low. It seemed to Rosendo that he recognized it and he asked, doubtfully:

"Jacinto Prieto?"

"That's right."

"Are you still in here?"

"Still here. I heard you asking about your food. Do you want them to bring it from my house along with mine?"

"All right. May God repay you!"

"Listen, if you need anything, I'm in cell number four."

"God bless you, I—"

The jailer came up sniffing as though he could hear with his nose.

"I told you that you were not to talk. The keeper is coming to see about your food."

"Thank you, but I've already arranged with Don Jacinto—"

"Oh, so you know him... Looks as though you folks all knew each other. . . ."

The jailer went on to tell Jacinto Prieto that it was positively forbidden to talk with Rosendo, and that if he kept on doing it he would be severely punished.

Now that his most urgent needs had been provided for, Rosendo felt as though he were sinking into empty space. Like every prisoner who lacks confidence in human justice, he saw nothing ahead of him but days.

The newspaper La Patria rejoiced on the front page:

"The news has been telegraphed from the prefecture of the department of the capture of the famous Indian agitator and leader, Rosendo Maqui. The police, after long pursuit, were able to take him without bloodshed, which goes to prove the skill and wisdom employed by the authorities in handling the problem of pacifying the Indians. As our readers will recall, Maqui was the head of the seditious movement in which the well-known gentleman, Roque Iniguez, was killed. And of late he has been marauding the countryside, and the stock raisers have suffered heavy losses.

"Although the capture of the subversive Rosendo Maqui represents a triumph for the forces of law and authority, this victory will not be complete so long as other dangerous agitators and their followers

enjoy impunity. We cannot overemphasize the need to send a division of the militia to cooperate with the police in liberating this prosperous region from the scourge of outlawry and the disorder of dangerous elements. The progress of our country and the peace of its citizens demand this."

Rosendo Maqui came to know the wall. When he opened his eyes the next day and found himself lying in his humble bed on the floor, then he really felt like a prisoner. There were the four unyielding walls; the dirty, foul-smelling floor, weighed down with the burden of sorrow; the heavy door that turned back even the voice; the closely-barred window that barely let the light filter through. He ran his hands along the wall. It was too solid for his age, and, even more, for his helpless hands. No prisoner, however guilty he may be, but feels in the wall the hardness of the human heart. Rosendo did not feel that he had been guilty of anything and yet the wall seemed to him the negation of life itself. The sorriest animal, the most insignificant insect, can use his legs or wings freely, while man, who considers himself the superior of all, heartlessly buries his fellow man in a gloomy hole. Rosendo always thought of life as space, perspective, landscapes, sun, air. And all this was cut down by a wall. Man himself was cut down. The prisoner; the jailer.

What was the meaning of justice? What was the meaning of the law? He had always despised them because he had known them only in the form of abuses and taxes: despoilment, fines, collections. Now he felt in his own flesh that it attacked the most perfect expression of life, the body of man. The body of man meant to Rosendo, although he was not able to express it, the harmony of life, and was the product of the earth and its fruits, of the work of beasts of burden, of the best gifts of understanding and energy. Why was it oppressed? The hand of man befouled the earth when it made it into a prison wall. Yet here was the wall, dark, silent, showing a faint layer of whitewash in places. Not one more step this way or that. The sorriest animal grazes sun. The lowliest plant walks the earth with its roots. The prisoner must swallow darkness and rot on a floor made sterile by misfortune. There was the wall. Justice? What, then, had Rosendo done? What had his body done to be locked up?

Rosendo came to know loneliness too. For two days he had no communication with anybody except the keeper who took him out to attend to his needs and brought him his food. To be sure, he heard

voices, saw some prisoners go by with their keepers, at night heard a song. All this formed part of an existence alien to him as yet. They had taken Jacinto Prieto away to another block of cells.

And he was alone. Man knew no more of man. If he exchanged an occasional word with the keeper it was devoid of all dignity, merely a noise to explain or order the simplest acts.

"Here's your food."

But the loneliness was not altogether due to the absence of words. It was in the body as well. He would have been satisfied if Goyo Auca, his son Abram, his little grandson, any one of the villagers had been beside him, even if they had not spoken a word. Who knew what secret affinities grow up in the voiceless dialogue between bodies? Once they are established, the tongue can hold its peace. Rosendo thought about Candela. Candela would have been company for him. So it was not only the body of man. It was living life that was needed. That was it, because man prefers to live in a land where trees grow rather than in a desert.

He himself had liked to be alone at certain times. That was why he climbed the mountain peaks. Though really, in his love of the heights, there was a desire for company of a grander kind. When is it that a man is really alone? To live is to desire. Whoever is master of his loneliness obeys those desires whose satisfaction he seeks. For instance, the case of a man whose body desires a woman, although this had nothing to do with Rosendo, for such things were over for him. But a man of keen energy and strong sex must feel what loneliness is in prison more than anywhere else, while the flaming, torturing monologue of the most powerful currents of life goes on.

Rosendo was thinking only of his own loneliness. As a matter of fact, he had once spoken to the priest on this matter of silent company, and the priest had said to him:

"How do you, an Indian, happen to think of such things?" as though an Indian could not think of things. Then he said, "That is the communion of souls."

But now Rosendo was thinking about Candela and the tree-covered lands. They were company, too, and yet the priest had said that neither animals nor plants had souls. Rosendo believed that Rumi had a spirit, and the land, and ... His poor head was too old to understand all these things. Now all he really felt was the loneliness. This going

round and round inside himself and emerging only to come up against the walls. He knew very well that a man, a dog, a bird, even a stalk of wheat or corn, or the branch of a tree, would have been company for him.

The wall, the loneliness. Time dragged him back and forth, came to his bed for him, got him up, fed him, wore him out again, and it was all the same thing: the wall, the loneliness.

The selectmen called a meeting to elect a mayor in the morning, for there was a storm brewing that would probably break in the afternoon. As though Rosendo were still there, the meeting was held in front of his house.

Goyo Auca, Clemente Yacu, Artidoro Oteiza, and Antonio Huilca sat down together, leaving an empty maguey stool in the middle. Between the stone hut and the fields lay the gentle slope where the villagers sat or gathered in groups. As they looked at the empty stool the men muttered to themselves and the women wept.

Goyo Auca got to his feet and, in a doleful voice, explained the situation. A strong wind tugged at the shawls and ponchos. Some of the people were coughing. The sky was heavy with clouds and looked like a vaulted ceiling of stone. The voice of Goyo Auca wept like a trickle of water in the dramatic immensity of the highlands.

There was not much of a debate. Clemente Yacu was elected mayor. He still had good sense and his ability to judge land had not failed. Although he still wore his hat tilted to one side, he no longer tossed his poncho across his shoulder. The need to protect himself from the highland winds and cold made him let it hang naturally across his chest. He was elected really because of the idea that everybody held that he was to be Rosendo's successor as mayor.

If the election had been on the strict basis of merit, Goyo Auca or Artidoro Oteiza might have won. But they were completely out of the running. Goyo, being so addicted to Rosendo, gave the impression that he never thought for himself. And though apparently blameless, Artidoro's name was linked to the loss of the cattle and the imprisonment of the mayor. Prudence made it seem wise to reserve all judgment. And as for Antonio Huilca, the strange idea that he might be mayor could only have occurred to a few of the reckless young men

who did not even venture to suggest it. In his short term as selectman he had behaved very well, but nobody could guarantee that he would go on the same way. He still had to pass the acid test of constancy.

Clemente Yacu, quietly and simply, took the vacant place. He was about fifty years old, tall with a pale face, badly burned now by the buffeting of the wind, from which a pair of dark eyes looked at people just as they looked at the ground when he said: "Good for potatoes. Good for olucos . . ." His first words were to ask for the election of a new selectman.

Nobody felt much like arguing, yet nevertheless a debate arose over the nomination of Artemio Chaquqi. Several voices were raised in his behalf. Artemio was a descendant of old Chaquqi, that wise, almost legendary figure, exemplar of the Indian spirit, whose memory rose from the past like a mountain peak through the clouds. It could not be said of Artemio that he was very wise. Surly, unmannerly, suspicious, he tried to live up to his ancestor's reputation by systematically opposing everything, finding fault with everything. He was not always successful, and this turned him bitter, since he believed that he was deliberately ignored. He was the implacable enemy of all outsiders. He would have liked to expel Porfirio Medrano from the community; in fact, it was Chaquqi who had been responsible for him losing his office as selectman.

Porfirio asked permission to speak, got to his feet, made a great show of thinking what he was about to say and then spoke:

"I should like to see Artemio Chaquqi made selectman. He is a good man, and besides being good, he is very stern. Nothing escapes him."

There was a veiled irony in his words, and although it was not a moment for laughter, some of the people laughed. Porfirio went on:

"But I ask this: what is it we need more than anything else? The answer is easy: work. For making decisions and such things we have the new mayor and the selectmen who have had experience. I propose a villager who has worked harder than anybody, who has shown bravery and strength. I propose Ambrosio Luma."

Luma was sitting with his wife and children, somewhat indifferent to what was going on, placidly chewing his coca. When he heard his name he looked at Porfirio with an air of surprise.

"Have him stand up," shouted several voices.

"Stand up, Ambrosio Luma," ordered the new mayor, who liked him and who was not anxious to see troublesome Chaquqi made selectman.

Ambrosio had to be coaxed a little but he finally stood up. He had a full, very dark face and his eyes were barely visible. He wore a hat that was black with age, and a purple poncho with narrow stripes. A great worker, he was very simple and modest. Porfirio and some of the others had noticed that he had a practical mind. Now, he went on shaking his little gourd of lime and moving the wire back and forth from it to his mouth, as calmly as though nothing were happening. Maybe he was thinking, "Whether they make me selectman or whether they don't, the only thing that will always matter is work." This indifference, free from any touch of vanity, won him the liking of all.

"See him," went on Porfirio, "this modest man has a head that knows what needs to be done. You will remember at the last assembly he said something like this—I don't remember his exact words: 'If we're going we had better do it quickly so the rains won't catch us without houses.' These few words had more of an effect on us all than the insulting speeches of certain people . . . (more laughter).

"And then what did he do? He began to work. He never complained about our misfortune nor did he do any unnecessary talking. Houses? He was the man who carried the most stones and cut the most logs. He knew where there was good timber. 'I saw good alder trees in such-and-such a place,' 'There are paucos in such-and-such a place,' 'I know where there are plenty of poles,' he said, as though he had planned it all out beforehand. He's a man who is always on the alert, and we all know the saying, 'Forewarned is forearmed.' He was the same way when we were plowing up the new ground and sowing the crops. It was he who went out to get seed. Well, you have all seen him and remember what he is like . . . This is the man who has courage and does his work without making a fuss and that's what we need in a selectman now."

"That's right!"

"That's right!" shouted more voices.

Now everybody remembered Ambrosio Luma. He really had worked stubbornly and courageously, without useless laments, and always giving proof of his capability. Clemente Yacu asked for a vote. Ambrosio Luma's candidacy had grown so fast in such a short time that nobody was surprised when he was elected, not even he.

Ambrosio probably thought to himself, "Of course, it's work that counts." He took the stool that was meant for him and looked around at everybody with the friendly air that characterized him.

Goyo Auca, after talking with Clemente Yacu, got up to speak. It seemed as though his devotion had immediately been transferred to the new mayor.

"We have no money," he said. "We spent all this community's money on the suit. Our lawyer, Correa Zavala, didn't charge us anything, but now his clients have left him because he's defending us Indians. We ought to give him something. So we want to ask you for a contribution for this and for the expenses that have come up in connection with our beloved Mayor Rosendo's imprisonment." Goyo's voice broke with emotion.

Ambrosio gave immediate proof of his practical spirit. With his blackened hat in his hand, he walked through the assembly taking up donations and soon had collected over eighty soles.

Clemente Yacu got to his feet and spoke in a firm, slow voice:

"I want to say that I will be mayor only as long as our good Rosendo Maqui is in prison. It's a bad situation but I haven't lost hope of getting him released. We must not lose hope of anything, even if he has to stay in jail, and that will make him happy. We must go on fighting for the community the same as he did."

Clemente dismissed the assembly. The women were drying their tears with their shawls. There was one who was happy that day: the wife of Ambrosio. She had always thought her husband was a fine member of the community and now at last they were doing him justice. She approached Porfirio and said to him:

"You are a good man."

Porfirio, who was as frank and open as a plow furrow, answered:

"I don't mind telling you that, most of all, I wanted to keep that impudent, mischief-making Artemio out. But I am glad to have nominated your husband, who is a brave, hard-working man."

In general, the assembly had left an impression of sadness, but they all agreed that their leaders, including the new one, inspired confidence and so they could go on hoping.

The prison was heavy with silence and monotony, when a voice rose from the hall:

"Keeper, bring out the prisoner Rosendo Maqui. He is to have a hearing."

It was on the fifth day of his imprisonment that they gave him a hearing. Rosendo changed his poncho, putting on a newer one, and followed the jailer. The entrance hall had a door on each side. They went through one into a large room. The judge was sitting at a long table with a clerk on one side and Correa Zavala on the other. At the door a trooper with fixed bayonet stood guard, a wise precaution on the part of the authorities in view of the prisoner's dangerous record. Rosendo was invited to sit down in a high chair, facing the judge, and as he was not used to chairs of this sort he felt uncomfortable.

Correa Zavala said to him:

"I am to take care of your defense."

The judge exhorted the prisoner to tell the truth, and began his long questioning. Rosendo was accused, not only of stealing cattle, but of having plotted Don Roque Iniguez's killing, the attempted murder of Don Alvaro Amenabar, and of complicity in the crimes of Fiero Vasquez and harboring him.

The hearing lasted five hours. Rosendo used his good common sense in answering and triumphed over the judge's insidious questions. At times Correa Zavala helped him out, saying:

"Will Your Honor be good enough to make the meaning of the question a little clearer?"

The judge looked at him out of the corner of his eye, twisted his graying mustache, and repeated the question. He would have liked to wipe out the defense attorney with a single phrase.

When the hearing was ended, Correa Zavala accompanied his client to his cell. He stayed there talking with him for a long time through the iron bars.

"Rosendo Maqui, you know the influence Amenabar has. The judge has been waiting for him to come and that is why he did not give you

a hearing. I had to get out a writ of habeas corpus, and then, very much against his will, he had to call you. It is against the law to keep a man under arrest more than twenty-four hours without a hearing. Things are at the boiling point in the highlands of Umay and for that reason Don Alvaro has not been able to come. They say there is a lot of shooting going on and that it's Fiero's men. One night they attacked the ranch itself, and two overseers were killed."

Rosendo kept silent, not knowing what to say.

"I would advise you, Maqui, to use your influence to stop this agitation. It goes against you. . . ."

"Do you think I can get out?"

"Yes, if the law is observed."

"You are very good, Don Correa, and you still believe in the law. You wait and see how they tangle us up."

"Come, Maqui, don't get discouraged. Your hearing was very good, and you must not lose heart."

"I defend myself out of habit and because the truth speaks for itself, but when all that trickery of the witnesses begins, you'll see—"

"Anyway, there will have to be proof."

"You probably know best, Don Correa. Now all I would ask you to do is to cheer up the villagers. They need it more than I do. I have been thinking a lot in this dungeon, and I know that I'm in for trouble."

It was beginning to get dark and the shadows were spreading from the gallery to the courtyard.

"I wish you would see if I could not have a little sun. On the excuse that I am incommunicado they won't even take me out in the sun."

"All right, Rosendo, I'll see if I can fix that up right away. And I'll ask them to put you in another block. This is a punishment cell and 'prisons are places for safekeeping not for punishment,'" said Correa, quoting from a legal authority.

"May God repay you."

"Don't you worry about anything. I'll see the villagers. And courage, eh? My office is near here, in the street where the church is. Send for

me if you need me."

The lawyer left and the echo of his footsteps died away in the dusty corridors. Rosendo was left with his image, crossed with bars, in his pupils. He was young, rather dark, with frank eyes and a somewhat melancholy smile. What was he trying to do? Couldn't he see the gigantic forces he was tilting against with the shifting, bending law as his only weapon? At least it was a comfort to know that there were still people with a kind heart in the world.

The next day, after breakfast, Rosendo had sun. The prison was an old house with two courtyards, and they took him to the inner one. There were many prisoners there. Others kept coming in through a hall where the plaster was peeling off. They were Indians and half-breeds of every age and state, of every description. Most of them wore ponchos.

Jacinto Prieto suddenly appeared and put his arms around Rosendo.

"Old man, brother."

The wrinkled old fellow was swallowed up in the blacksmith's arms. Prieto was still wearing his same old cap, his same old cotton suit, and his same heavy shoes. From being shut up and away from his forge for so long his face was not so dark as usual.

"Rosendo, sit down here on this bench, sit down, please."

The blacksmith brought over a little bench.

"No, I'm all right here, on the floor."

"No, you sit here on the bench, and I'll stand up. You know I'm younger than you are."

Rosendo sat down but Jacinto did not stand up, for seeing a big rock he got it and brought it over beside his friend. The other prisoners looked on in admiration. A strong man, this Don Jacinto.

"Look, Rosendo, at this bare courtyard, all mud and filth on that side. You know why we're put here? Because of thievery. Before, they used to take us out to the paved courtyard to get the sun, and in front of the entrance, so that people couldn't look in from the street, was a

wooden screen, a big heavy one. Would you believe it, Rosendo, the subprefect happened to notice that it was of walnut and he sold it, going halves with the jailer. That's why they bring us in here. All for a matter of ten or twenty soles. So that they won't see from the street how the prisoners are kept they put us here, on this damp, muddy ground."

This part of the jail was in a ramshackle state. The roof leaked, letting the water drip into the cells and corridors, which were open and unfit for use, exuding dampness. There was only one side where the sun came in and there the prisoners sat or walked. The other side was covered with mud and standing water on which floated a green scum. Toward the back a roof which had fallen down left bare an old wall which was being washed away by the rain. Everything to be seen there was a sorry sight, and still sadder if one looked at the men. Barefooted Indians, in ragged ponchos, dull and thin as starving animals. Those who were under the judge's jurisdiction received half a sol a day for their food and other expenses. How could they perform this miracle? Those who had no relatives to help them managed to exist on parched corn, coca, and the scanty leftovers of the more fortunate. Those who were under the charge of the subprefect had still a worse time. They did not receive anything, and to be released, if there was any chance of this, they first had to pay the jail charges. If they did not have the money for this, the subprefect hired them out to a labor agent for ranches or mines who would make an advance against their wages. The half-breeds, with one or two exceptions, were no better off. They were nearly all town people, and for this reason, and because their clothing was of cotton and "ready-made," they felt superior to the country people.

"And don't they do anything to you for talking this way about them?" Rosendo asked his friend.

"What can happen to me? Here, among these poor devils, there are several informers, but I talk on purpose so they can hear me, so they will know—"

"Jacinto, I think you are making a mistake."

"They've already trumped up so many charges against me, what more can they do?"

As they talked the sun shone upon their backs and warmed their flesh, loosening up the rusty hinges of their bones. Prison teaches many things, among them, what a bit of sun means, or a little light filtering

through a clouded sky. Light, the friend of life and of the precious gift of sight. When one comes out of the darkness one realizes all that the eyes have been denied. In the light there is form and color and, therefore, the world in all its extension, even though for the moment it is hedged about by the black barriers of walls.

At night the prisoners would sing, especially the half-breeds. The Indians preferred to play their reed pipes or their flutes. A half-breed, from the town, from the section of Our Lady, would intone a long-drawn-out triste:

The twenty-fifth of August
They took me prisoner,
They took me to jail.
To the first prison!
Ay, ay, ay!
To the first prison!

Rosendo leaned against the window listening, chewing his coca. These songs took him out of his own world to make him a spiritual resident of the town. He had rarely listened to them before, as he preferred the sweet lyric tone of the huainos:

Prison of my sorrows,
Tomb of living men,
Where they show themselves faithless—
The best-loved friends!
Ay, ay, ay!
The best-loved friends!

The deep, quivering voice wounded the night. It began evenly and somewhat monotonously, but then it broke forth in the lament of the long ay, ay, ay! and died away, deploring its misfortunes in a desolate tone.

Penitentiary of Lima,
Of mortar, stone and brick,
Where the wild ones become tame—
And the unhappy weep!
Ay, ay, ay!
And the unhappy weep!

This triste was one of the favorites among the prisoners. They all

found in it a reflection, to a certain extent, of their own mishaps. And the penitentiary of Lima, the building of the capital best-known throughout the provinces of Peru, raised its tragic structure at the end.

At nine came the order for silence. And at twelve began the cries of the guards: "One," "Two," "Three," "Four." Three called their numbers from the roof. The "Four" resounded in the halls, pacing back and forth past the cells. When one of them failed to answer it was because he had fallen asleep, and then they went to waken him. In the silence of the night the cries, re-echoing, turned into a lugubrious howl which tortured wakefulness with dreams of freedom.

One day Jacinto Prieto was radiant with happiness as he came to the courtyard where they took the sun.

"What do you think, Rosendo! My son has come home. It was about time. He's put in two good years with the army. What do you suppose he could have said to the jailer to make him let me see him even though it wasn't Sunday? He's so straight and strong and he's got a sergeant's stripes on his sleeves. He's a man now. Now he can take charge of the blacksmith shop, and maybe he can even get me out of here. His poor mother is so happy. My son, it's made me so happy to see my son!"

While Rosendo was incommunicado he could not have visitors on Sunday. The villagers had to go home after pleading in vain to be allowed to see him. But they were back the next Sunday. And they waited uneasily until the visiting hour finally came, well after noon.

Rosendo embraced Juanacha, his little grandson, Abram, Nicasio, Clemente Yacu, Goyo Auca, Adrian Santos, and still others. A fragment of the beloved community was there, looking at him, talking to him, bringing him simple gifts.

Clemente told him about the assembly and everything that had taken place there. They knew no details of the attack on Umay and the killing of two overseers. It was said that the mounted police were going after Fiero Vasquez.

Juanacha, paying no heed to the weightiness of Clemente's report,

rambled on about how they had got up very early to be on time, and that the ones who weren't able to come, because there weren't enough horses to go around, would come next Sunday and that . . . Rosendo, eager to catch Yacu's every word, paid no attention to what she was saying, but the sound of that dearly loved voice, so gay and clear, did his heart good, like certain melodies that carry us back to happy, bygone days.

They sat down in a circle and the old man began to play with his grandson. He was the youngest of all, but he could walk and say "father." Correa Zavala had told the villagers all about the hearing, and they showed a revived optimism, which Rosendo took care not to discourage.

Jacinto came up, accompanied by his son:

"Doesn't the boy look fine? I told him to come in his uniform and he did. Speak to the people, Enrique. Don't you remember our friends, the villagers?"

"Of course I do. Don't get up, Don Rosendo."

They shook hands and his father led him away, holding on to his arm, rejoicing with pride in his strong, important son, who wore with ease his gray-green uniform with its two red stripes on the sleeve.

The two hours went very fast. Rosendo said to Clemente:

"Don't give any excuse for them to destroy the community by force."

After his visitors had left, Rosendo noticed the loneliness of an Indian, without friends or possessions, who sat on the ground trying to protect his skinny body from cold and curious glances with his ragged poncho.

"Come over," said Rosendo, "and have something to eat."

He showed him the food they had brought him and the Indian began to eat ravenously. Rosendo ate a little, too, but the ragged Indian never stopped until he had finished everything there was in the gourds. Afterward, the jailer went about his daily locking up. In spite of everything his defender was doing, Rosendo stayed on in his cell. Time became as before, perhaps even longer.

Don Alvaro Amenabar y Roldan arrived in town, with all his family, unexpectedly. The news was brought to the prison by one of the troopers.

"The big rooster has arrived with all his chickens. He bragged about how he and his overseers were going to rope Fiero Vasquez, and now he's running away. They say he came a roundabout way, and now I'll bet he's going to ask them to send us out after Fiero."

The first thing the rancher demanded was that El Loco Pierolista be put in jail. When he heard the verses the poet was making up about him, he couldn't help laughing a little, but he said to the subprefect:

"He ought to be put in jail for that."

"How many days, sir?"

"As many as you think."

And so El Loco Pierolista landed up in the cell next to Rosendo's, but he carried on so, asking to be taken out, that they had to move him to another block. The prisoners received him with delight, and in a little while he began to sing, to the tune of a huaino, the verses that had got him into trouble:

They say there is a rancher,
A man of high position,
Who nevertheless lacks
A little bit of heart.

"Bravo!"

"That Loco is a card!" shouted the prisoners.

He may lack heart,
But he has more than enough reasons,
To turn free men
Into miserable peons.

"That's even better. . . ."

"Go on, Loco, your verses cheer us up!"

Some are killed by fright,
Some by sickness.
They say there's one who's going to die

From eating a community.

"That's wonderful!"

"Hooray for El Loco! Hooray!"

The laughter and cheers became so loud that a keeper yelled to the prisoners to keep quiet and to remember they were in jail and not out in a barn lot. When quiet had finally come, El Loco let out his stenorian:

"Hooray for Pierola!"

Somebody once asked him why he always shouted that, and he answered: "Because I like to," without giving further explanations. Perhaps he did not even know who was this leader of the year '95 that he was cheering.

The next day "in the sun," Rosendo made the acquaintance of El Loco. He was a man of medium height, thin, with bleary eyes and a sparse beard, who greeted him very politely and at the same time expressed his indignation over the shameless abuse of which they were the victims. He lived on what he could pick up around the saloons, entertaining the customers, on what he made by writing verses on postcards, and by advertising the merchandise to be sold at municipal auctions. This same voice that cheered Pierola could be heard shouting at the top of its lungs: "For sale: a cow and a bull . . . Eighty soles . . . Anybody offering more? Let's have another offer." It was just a formula. Those who were interested in buying were generally at the place of auction and they had no need of this shouting to know what was going on. When the bid went up somebody told El Loco, who, from the doorway, repeated his call, changing only the price. El Loco was also the champion of misused poets. During his lifetime, and because of his verses, he had been in jail eighty-four times. He knew the place well, knew all its secrets, and the keepers treated him with special consideration.

He entertained the prisoners for five days and, as he was released, he shouted from the door, by way of farewell:

"Hooray for Pierola!"

"One," "Two," "Three," "Four."

Rosendo had grown accustomed to the monotonous counting in the night. Sometimes he thought about the damned snake he had met that now remote day. Surely all that had happened was a great deal of misfortune to be foretold by one poor snake. And what about Rumi's favorable answer? It was probably his own heart that answered.

Rosendo felt himself closer all the time to Pascuala, to Anselmo. He felt them near him, as though they were lying there with him, beside his pillow. The darkness would not be hard with them.

"One," "Two," "Three," "Four."

He must get to sleep. Was that somebody moaning in the distance?

Little by little Rosendo made friends with the other prisoners. The Indians were not quite at ease with Jacinto Prieto. The old mayor inspired them first with respect, and, when they came to know him better, with real veneration. "You are good, father." The most ragged of them all, the one he had invited to share his food, told him his story.

His name was Honorio and he was alone in the world. He had no property except his rags, and no home except the jail. Did Rosendo notice his thin face, his bony hands, his stooped back? They had not always been like that. Once he had been full of life and strength, and his body stood up, in sun or in rain, like a strong tree. And why speak of women! He had liked them and when he finally chose one, she was loving and hard-working.

Then it came about that a bridge had to be built across the Palumi River; and as this bridge was considered a public work they began to recruit laborers. You either went willingly or they took you by force, so Honorio went. It was a big bridge, sir, all stone, and it seemed as if the work would never end. They worked from sunup to sundown, the food was poor, and they finally finished the bridge in six months. "All right, now you can go." To some they gave ten soles and to others, five. They had left a piece of their life there in those stones and that was what they paid them for it. But that was not the worst for Honorio.

When he got back to his land, not even his house was there. The plague had come that way and some of the people had run away from it and others had died. The rancher had had the houses burned down to get rid of any danger of contagion. Nobody was able to tell Honorio whether his parents and his wife had left or had died.

He looked at the ashes of his pitiful cabin and said to himself:

"They must have left. There's no reason why they should all die." When the heart is determined to hope it is blind.

So he crossed the mountains, walking, walking, trying to find his wife and his father and mother. All of a sudden, he saw a new house off in the distance, its thatch still yellow, and he thought maybe they had built it, and they would be there. When he got to it he found that its dwellers were strangers. He wandered like this for a long time, here, there, without losing hope.

When they had taken him away to the bridge his wife had been wearing a red skirt. During the days of his search, whenever he saw a woman wearing a skirt that color, he would run as fast as he could to overtake her, for he had it in his head that his wife would still be wearing that skirt. No, no, it wasn't his wife. It was another woman, who looked at him suspiciously, thinking he might be trying to take advantage of her.

He told everyone he met the name of his parents and his wife and he asked them if they had ever heard speak of them or seen them. When he realized how useless his efforts were he decided to return to the lands he had always cultivated, because he liked it there and his heart had not yet given up hope. He would build a new house, he would plow and sow. When his parents and his wife heard that the bridge was finished they would come back to the ranch thinking to find him there. He could not resign himself to the thought that he had lost them.

On his way back he met up in an inn with a group of men with a drove of cattle. He found himself a place and lay down to sleep. When he woke up in the morning he found himself a prisoner.

"Oh, you scoundrelly thief!"

"What have I done?"

"You're under arrest, you're pretending to be dumb, you thief!"

The real thieves, who were the men that were driving the cattle, realizing that they were being pursued, had run off.

Honorio was taken to jail. He could not prove what he had been doing since he finished the bridge until he was arrested. When he told them that he had been looking for his wife and parents, they said:

"Who ever heard of an Indian having such feelings! He wouldn't give a damn and would probably have turned horse thief."

Where would he get any witnesses? He did not know the names of the people he had questioned and they would not remember him, for nobody pays any attention to a poor stranger that happens by.

Once, a trooper had to go on business to another province and Honorio begged him, as a favor, when he went by such-and-such a place, to see some Indians who lived in two little houses—one made of clay and wattles and the other of adobes—where he had stayed one night, and ask them to come and testify. When he came back the trooper told him they had said:

"Yes, there was a poor fellow that came here one night looking for his family. We felt sorry for him, but we don't remember what he looked like. Besides, who's going to go and testify? Before you know it, we'd be arrested for harboring a thief."

He was accused of stealing twenty head of cattle. If they could not prove he was guilty, neither could he prove that he was innocent. All the evidence was unfavorable to him and a herder had claimed to recognize him as one of the thieves he had seen keeping watch over the cattle as they drove them out of the pasture. All Indians look alike, and it might be a mistake, but, in the meantime, there Honorio stayed. They were waiting for his accomplices to be captured. When? He had been a prisoner there for three years, without having a change of clothing or food to eat. His old clothes were falling off his body. With his half sol a day he sometimes bought corn, sometimes potatoes, and sometimes coca. He felt like a dog sniffing in a garbage heap. Now he did believe that his parents and his wife were dead, for his heart no longer had strength to hope for anything. The cold of the prison had eaten into his bones. He was weak and sick and he felt that he was going to die.

Rosendo was called for a further hearing. Casimiro Rosas had testified

that he had sold Don Alvaro Amenabar a black bull which belonged to him, and then, before the judge, he had identified it as the one they had taken away from Rosendo at the pasture gate. Besides, he had said that the brand CR was his own. Rosendo repeated what he had said in his earlier hearing and stated that, although he could not read, he knew the community brand by its shape. This was the brand on the black bull. Correa Zavala immediately asked to have an expert's opinion on the matter of brands.

The half-breed from the district of Our Lady who sang the tristes was in jail because of a fight. He was a short fellow who wore a white hat with a band showing the national colors of Peru and a yellow shirt with a wrinkled collar. He looked strong and the evidence in his trial proved that he was.

"Well, what the devil, a fellow sometimes feels tough, and if his arm works with him he can do a lot of damage."

He loved to tell about his adventures.

One night he and some friends were drinking at the tavern of a woman nicknamed Partridge. There was guitar playing and singing, and the drinks kept coming faster. They were getting drunk and they started to dance. Oh, those marineras! Partridge and the other women who had turned up just in time were like tops. How they could tap! Chicha and more chicha. Just then some twenty half-breeds from the district of Holy Christ came in.

"Now, friends," asked the prisoner, "don't you think it was stupid or shameless of them to come butting in where we were dancing? They've got their own taverns and everybody knows that there's always been a feud between the districts of Holy Christ and Our Lady ever since the town was first built?"

The prisoner and his companions were only ten at the moment, but what could they do when their honor was involved? Ask the men of Holy Christ to leave? That's what they did.

"Leave?" answered the most impudent of them. "All the districts are ours." That was more than the men of Our Lady could stand. And there the trouble began. Punches, kicks, butting heads. The women screeched. The men roared. A table was broken and the prisoner got hold of one of the legs. With his mace he attacked the enemy hordes.

With every blow he landed a man went down. He was drunk with chicha and battle rage and he began to deal bludgeon blows right and left. All those who were still on their feet ran away, even the women, and the Partridge fell too—though not defending her establishment—and for many days afterwards she had a big goose egg on her head.

The fighter, finding himself alone, began on the bottles, the jugs, and the pots, and not one was left whole. When the police arrived some of the victims on the floor were groaning with pain and others were lapping up the chicha that was running over the floor.

That was how he landed in jail.

Fortunately the table leg was not very heavy, so there were only two broken heads, three collarbones, two forearms, and one hand. The rest got off with bruises. The Partridge had behaved very well about the whole thing, and did not hand in a bill for the broken crockery, nor even for the chicha that had been spilled. To be sure, it was said that her conscience was not too clear; for she had been accepting attentions from that insolent half-breed and let him come to her place, and, when you thought it over, that was treason to the district of Our Lady. Anyway, he had paid for his impudence with a broken collarbone and a smashed nose. The prisoner had learned all these details at the hearing and from reports of the fight. He could remember only up to the moment he grabbed the table leg and started the attack.

"But tell me, friends, don't you think that was like a war, and that it's wrong for them to have me under arrest?"

One night the gates of the Amenabar house opened to let out five horsemen who crossed the square at a gallop and rapidly rode away from the town. They were Don Alvaro Amenabar, his youngest son, Jose Gonzalo, and three overseers. The rancher was taking Pepito to a school in Lima and, besides, he was going to get support in the capital for his son Oscar's candidacy.

When the news spread through the town the next day the travelers were already beyond the highlands of Huarca, probably entering another province. Correa Zavala visited Rosendo and the old man said:

"Looks like a stampede."

Jacinto Prieto thought he would soon be free. When the villagers came for their Sunday visit they rejoiced greatly, and when they brought the news back to the village even Artemio Chauqui said it looked as though the barley crop was going to be good.

One of the prisoners from town was called Absalon Quinez and he had a round, sly face, sharp eyes, and thick lips. His hair was always carefully combed and his old gray suit shone from so much brushing. His shoes could not make up their mind whether to wear out or not, and the brim of his black felt hat drooped like the wings of a sick bird. Absalon knew the coast region and boasted of being slick and able to get the better of anybody if he wanted to. He was always in good spirits, and like every prisoner whose case is out of the ordinary he liked to tell about it for the astonishment it caused his hearers. A young half-breed, up for his first offense, was fascinated by him. All the others warned him to keep away from Absalon or he would pick up his tricks. The boy was called Pedro and was accused of stealing goats.

One day the old mayor heard Quinez telling Pedro about his exploits:

"Now, I'm going to tell you one thing: a man isn't a man till he has 'pissed in the sand,' I mean, till he knows the coast. I used to be like you fellows, a dumb mountaineer, till I cut loose and went there. Once I was working as helper to a Colombian, name of Gonzalez, and I had to go along with him carrying his suitcase. The things he jammed into that suitcase! It looked as though it would burst. Blankets, papers, bottles of ink—because part of his business was selling ink—samples of patent medicines, and goods of different kinds, for he was a traveling salesman too. And what he always carried was a little machine wrapped up in newspapers. Guess what it was for. To print money! Not real money, you know; counterfeit money, and so you'll understand, I'll tell you what happened.

"With the excuse of his business my boss Gonzalez traveled here, there, and everywhere, and me behind with the suitcase. As he was sharp, not a thing got by him. He would talk for a long time and then he would start explaining the 'business,' almost always at night, because you should know that the night is the best time for certain things. A thing that seems no good at noon may sound all right at two or three in the morning. Gonzalez would ink his machine, put a piece of blank paper between the rollers, turn the handle, and out would

come a counterfeit bill, one of those worth five pounds, and so clear it looked like a real one. Sometimes he didn't use the machine but said he printed the counterfeit bills from a real one, all depending on how stupid his customer was. The truth is that to show them how well he could counterfeit, he used a sleight-of-hand trick. It was a real bill he showed them. The others, the counterfeit, came out so faint that only a blind man would have accepted them. Gonzalez, with his convincing tone, and his respectable look, and his mouth which was that of a man who knows the secrets of getting rich quick, would say:

"'The other bills didn't come out well because this paper is no good. The first one was good because that was the last of the high-quality paper.'

"He spoke very distinctly, and then he would say:

"'The good paper is a special kind that has to be ordered from Lima. It is very expensive.'

"His customer looked upset, thoughtful, and Gonzalez, after a pause, went on:

"'I haven't got much money and you know there's so much competition in this traveling salesman business that I can't even make a living. I am looking for somebody to share the initial expenses. You are the man.'

"He paused again and then, if the man was a storekeeper, he said:

"'You could pass the money, little by little in your store. But if you don't want to do that, I know people who will. The most important thing is to get the stuff that is needed.'

"Gonzalez kept on talking, stopping now and then, and guiding the conversation according to the expression on the man's face.

"His hearer asked:

"'And how much would it take?'

"Then Gonzalez, who had sized up the man's possibilities by the look of his business, asked for five hundred or three hundred or two hundred soles. He never went below two hundred and sometimes he went up to a thousand. Once we even got more. Then he explained that as soon as they had passed the first bills he would order more paper and the production of wealth would increase. He gave his word

of honor and his associate handed over the money. Naturally, he never laid eyes on him again. Or if he did, it didn't matter. There was this difficulty, that difficulty . . . There were even cases where his associate handed over more money."

Pedro ventured to ask:

"What about the police?"

"Police, hell. That shows how dumb you are and how you don't understand anything. His associate was as guilty as he was and he didn't dare open his mouth, even to say good morning, to a policeman. If Gonzalez had gone to jail, his associate would have had to go, too, for complicity in making counterfeit money. My boss traveled around with his little machine, from town to town. Not a month went by that we didn't find one or two suckers. But once they weren't such suckers and the police almost took a hand in the game at Gonzalez's own request. We met up with some rich fellows in the district of Lucma, and I don't need to tell you that those people of Lucma are plenty tough. They have a reputation for it all through that part of the country."

"Yes, they're famous," exclaimed Pedro, and, for the first time, his voice had an accent of admiration.

"We met up with them in Trujillo and my boss had himself introduced to them, as though by accident, and he had a few drinks with them. Afterwards a friend of his told these men, sort of secretlike, that this gentleman could show them how to make a lot of money, and the friendship went on, and today they said a little bit, and tomorrow a little bit more. Till finally one of the men handed over two thousand soles and it was agreed that they would start turning out the money soon. As they were in a hurry Gonzalez asked for another thousand soles. They were getting suspicious and were threatening to kill Gonzalez. Two of them came to the hotel where we were staying before we could make our getaway. There was no choice, anyway; we had to play out our hand.

"So we got ready to print the money, and Gonzalez said to an accomplice of his:

"'If I'm not out of here by three, send in the police.'

"The suitcase was stuffed fuller than ever. He had the press in it, a lot of paper, and several bottles of different kinds of liquid. The room was on the outskirts of the town. After locking the door the men from

Lucma pulled out their revolvers. Good bright Smith and Wessons they were too. I saw that my boss's hands were shaking a little. That had never happened before and I was getting scared too . . . This was a serious business. . . .

"Gonzalez began to take out the stuff and put it on a table: the machine, the paper—cut to the size of five-pound notes—and the bottles. He did it all very leisurely. He was taking his time on purpose so it would all seem natural and they would not start to suspect that they had been cheated. My boss was as wise as they come, even though he hardly knew how to read or write. Besides, he had to allow time enough for the police to get there if things went badly. He poured the liquids into a wash basin and very carefully dipped the pieces of paper into it and then took them out and laid them to one side. The others sat watching, not saying a word, with their revolvers in their hands. The barrels glittered. Afterwards Gonzalez used to tell that, at that moment, he had a bitter taste in his mouth. Where in the devil was he going to make the notes come from? But he had his plan worked out, and every now and then he glanced at his wrist watch. If anything went wrong with his plan and the police didn't get there, he was a goner and so was I.

"Just then he called over to one of his associates:

"'See, this is the first part of the process," and this and that and I don't know what all.

"And suddenly, wham! The paper and the liquids caught fire, the flame blazed up to the ceiling, and everybody ran for the door. The stuff all burned up before you could say Jack Robinson. As soon as the fire burned out, Gonzalez explained everything: a spark had dropped from the cigarette his associate was holding and had set off the blaze. What a terrible pity!

"The others were mad and said he should have warned them not to smoke. He took their complaints cheerfully, and suggested that they give him two thousand soles more to order new materials from Lima. The shrewdest of the lot, or maybe the stingiest, said they had to go back to their town to attend to their businesses and that afterward they would see about it. So they put the matter off for some other time.

"My boss put the machine into the suitcase and we left. When we got to the corner he said good-bye, and we turned several more corners till we met his accomplice. They looked at their watches. It was five

minutes of three. We sighed with relief and went to have a couple of drinks."

"What a lot of things you've done," said Pedro, beginning to admire Quinez.

"And the things I'm going to do. I'm not done yet. I'm not a man who scares easy. That's the money dodge. I know the one about finding buried treasure, and renting houses, and leaving fake silver in deposit, and a lot of others. The one about the money I learned from my boss Gonzalez, who unfortunately went back where he came from, and the others from a Peruvian he introduced me to. I know how to do the buried treasure one very well; but when your helpers are dumb it doesn't work.

"I tried to work it on the priest in that same town. I went to church, pretending to be very devout, and I said to him:

" 'Father, yesterday while I was listening to you at mass it occurred to me that there might be buried treasure in this old church. Maybe the Jesuits left it here.'

"It's always a good thing to mention the Jesuits when you speak of things hidden in churches. They have the reputation of having buried a lot.

" 'What?" said the priest.'

"I talked to him about buried treasures, and told him that I had found as many as ten, and he agreed that we should look at night, for during the day the church was full of old women. The first couple of nights he went with me, but after that he got sleepy and let me go by myself. 'Here's your chance, Absalon,' I said to myself. I had an old leather-covered box ready, full of things that looked like gold but were only alloy. I dug a deep hole, stuck the box in it, and covered up the hole again, but not completely, so you could see I had found something. The next day I went to see the priest.

" 'Father, I think I've struck something. The dirt is loose and I believe we're going to be lucky.'

"The priest went with me that night and he carried the lantern himself. I loosened up the dirt with a crowbar and shoveled it out, sweating and calling on all the saints to help us. In a little while the crowbar hit against the box.

" 'Holy Virgin!'

"I crossed myself and clasped my hands, raising my eyes to Heaven, and the priest did the same.

"Well, we got out the box and took it to the priest's house. There were two embossed trays, a chalice, and some other things, all of gold. We covered up the hole and I said to the priest, making out that I was very honest:

" 'We will have to give the State a share, according to the law.'

"The priest said to me:

" 'No, son, what makes you think that? These treasures, as you say, belonged to the Jesuits and there is no reason why the State should have a share in it. I have friends, and we'll sell this stuff on the quiet, and we'll divide the money between us.'

"Everything was working out fine.

"Then I said to my assistant:

" 'You go to the capital of the next province and send me a telegram saying that you must see me immediately about some business we have under way.'

"I thought when I got the telegram I would go to see the priest and tell him I had a chance to bring off a good deal in a nearby town and that I could not wait until he had sold the things, so he would have to give me my share in money. It was certain that he would try to take advantage of me, and I had decided I would settle for five hundred soles. But that idiot of a helper I had, either because he thought this was the better way or because he hadn't understood me, sent the telegram to the priest, saying:

" 'Tell Quinez awaiting him urgent business.'

"Did you ever hear of such a fool? The priest began to wonder how anybody knew that he and I had anything to do with one another, and he became suspicious. As I had already got two hundred soles from him, he informed on me, pretending to be very honest and handing the treasure over to the authorities. Afterward I found out that he had called in a jeweler to test the stuff and the acid ate right through it. The authorities tested it, too, and I defended myself, saying it wasn't my fault if they buried fake stuff. But they called in experts to

examine the box and the leather and even the nails, and they said it hadn't been buried even a week. So I was arrested for fraud.

"But I'll get out, you just wait. I've got stuff on several of the big shots here, and I know a few things about the priest too. If they don't let me out I'll tell everything I know at the trial. You'll see, Pedro.

"To work the silver dodge, you have to have a very dumb dealer; but you can find them. I'll tell you how I once. . . ."

The end of their time in the sun had come for that afternoon, and the prisoners were taken back to their cells.

Rain in the night is the only thing that sounds the same in jail or out of it. It fell there on the tiles, in the courtyard, in the puddles, just as it patters everywhere. By day it was different. The prisoners were not taken out to the courtyard and they watched it from their seclusion behind the bars. It looked like a grayish skein of wool that would never come completely unwound, and the noise of it was like a miserable, useless, meaningless stutter. Boredom, abetted by the damp cold, shriveled their bodies.

One afternoon an Indian in the throes of despair came over to Rosendo, peering into his eyes as though to ask them about himself. He looked as though he were mad. The poor wretch kept saying, "Now, now," and then, "stream of blood." He kept recalling his house in the mountains and saying, "What shall I do? This poncho is warm and it belongs to somebody else, for it comes down to my ankles." The dead man, the dead man, he could not get him out of his mind and he was in the coca. There was blood in the wad of coca or a little dead man who looked just like the big one. The big one threw himself on him at night to crush him and he said, "Get away, dead man." They had hit him on the head with a stick and he saw stars. He had two sheep in the pasture, and the dead man didn't walk, he flew. He had a donkey, too, who licked salt out of his hand, and the dead man kept watching . . . "Father, he wants to kill me to get my little black sheep." "The dead man, the dead man." The poor wretch threw himself on Rosendo's breast, and Rosendo took him in his arms and protected him from the dead man, holding him against his breast. The poor Indian

wept, and so did Rosendo.

There were six Indians, two of them women, who were accused of sedition and of attacking the armed forces. They were from the foothills of Suni and, once a day, they ate their boiled wheat which the women prepared over a hearth they had built in a corner of the earth-floored courtyard. They kept close together all the time and looked like a sheaf of misery.

Four troopers had gone to Suni at recruiting time and they took four lads away with them. At a certain place in the road the prisoners, lying in wait, threw their lassos over the troopers, pulled them off their horses, and enabled the recruits to escape.

The attackers had already been in prison for two years. They had to be taken for trial to Piura, where the Military Command of the Zone of the North was located.

"Where is Piura?" they often asked.

Those who knew told them that Piura was behind the farthest mountain ranges, after crossing a great desert of sand. It was far, far away. But they wouldn't believe it and, the first chance they got, they asked someone else. The answer was always the same. So far away!

Anyway, they hoped they would take them there. They never thought they were committing such a serious crime. There was nobody to cultivate their little fields, their families would be suffering dreadfully, and their stock would be lost or dead. They wanted them to take them so they would know their fate, but nobody remembered about them.

One Indian, during the Sunday visit, said to another who was on trial for assault and battery:

"I think it would be a good idea for Filomena to come and cry so that the judge could hear her while you're having your hearing ... Have her cry a lot and see if the judge takes pity on you. ..."

Some days later they called the Indian charged with assault and battery for his hearing and outside the prison door could be heard

loud howling, piercing cries.

This weeping gave the old mayor a feeling of shame, but, at the same time, he realized what slavery did to people.

One night the sound of horses' hoofs echoed in the cobbled courtyard. Then they sounded still louder turning back into the street and disappeared. The next day the prisoners were not taken out in the sun on the pretext that it was soon going to rain. Correa Zavala came to see Rosendo and said to him:

"They are not taking you out as a precautionary measure, for there are few troopers left here. Forty left last night and they say they've gone out to get Fiero Vasquez."

The news flew from cell to cell, from block to block. The prisoners felt a warm sympathy for Fiero Vasquez, whom they looked upon as the avenger of all their outrages and sufferings.

"Hooray for Fiero Vasquez!"

"Bring in Fiero Vasquez!"

The doors shook with shouts and curses. The boards creaked. Bolts and chains grated. The troopers on guard came in firing shots and the prisoners shrank back against the walls. The bullets perforated the doors and buried themselves in the opposite wall with a dull thud.

The days went by more sadly and monotonously than before, for the strict confinement continued. Nothing was heard about Fiero Vasquez's pursuers. Meanwhile, the subprefect, alleging that the province was in a state of agitation, threw prisoners into jail by the dozen. Each one had to pay five soles to recover his liberty. And would they be in for it if they kept on disturbing the public order! Jacinto Prieto shouted his protests at having been put into another block of cells so that he could not talk with Rosendo. His shouts echoed a while among the old walls and then died away.

Rosendo finally came to hear the solemn affirmation of the wall, whose quiet impact was like man's contact with life or death. The wall is a silent watchtower, an icy keeper, whose silent truth enfolds the dark tragedy of the motionless combat. To understand it one must be silent and in constant peril of dying and not dying. Rosendo finally came to understand its hopeless voice, its pathless eyes, and its crumbling loftiness.

13

Valencio at Yanarahui

Casiana's full wool skirt was distended by her advancing pregnancy, her movements became heavy, and her breasts swollen, causing them sweet agitation and pain. Her whole being was germinating with a steady, throbbing growth. They had been left all alone: Paula, she, and Doroteo's children. Within her a new being was preparing to come forth; and, without, life was hard, and poverty and orphanhood seem to be ripening in the tragic womb of life. What had become of Fiero Vasquez? What had become of Doroteo Quispe? The two sisters and the children made brief conjectures in the loneliness of their stone hut. The women had long been acquainted with sorrow, and if they let their thoughts wander much the possibility of misfortune became a certainty.

Clemente Yacu came over one day to talk with Paula:

"Paula, you know the customs of the community. I said at the assembly that the case of Doroteo was not that of a man who had left because he was lazy and did not want to work, but because he was desperate. But he could send you something. Don't you know where he is? Nevertheless, you go and get your rations. You women have done your work, and even if Doroteo ought to be working for the children we'll let that go this time. I have set aside your share of the food. The harvest wasn't big, but it will be better next year. The frost hit us badly and we haven't been able to cultivate this land as it should be yet."

Clemente went on talking, mostly about the land. As he was leaving, he said:

"Well, Paula, try to find a way to have Doroteo fulfill his obligations. I have said the same to the families of Condorumi and Jeronimo. Of course, others have left but they've taken their families and everything with them, and no longer belong to the community, and the younger ones don't have any family to support . . . You, Casiana, are going to have a baby. While some villagers die or go off to faraway parts, which is the same as dying, others arrive. All right, all right. I don't say anything about your man, who never was one of the community. I'll be expecting you to come and get your share."

The harvest of potatoes, ocas, and ollucos had been gathered some time back, and both Casiana, in spite of her pregnancy, and Paula, who had left the children to look after the work of the house, had done their part, industriously pulling up the vines and digging up the hills with long wooden forks. Now they saw that the community, following its time-honored laws, demanded his contribution from a member who had not separated himself completely with his family and all from it, and therefore had no right to let his obligations weigh on others.

As Clemente Yacu went through the low door, bending his long body, he said:

"Don't worry, you can depend on me. But it would be a good thing if Doroteo could find a way to pay if he doesn't come back. Your case is not the same, Casiana, and I think we'll have to change our rules. It's not a very pleasant situation for anybody, not even for the community itself, and still less for the wives whose husbands have had to run away from the police. . . ."

Paula and Casiana thought that Yacu was a kind, just man, but that, nevertheless, they were in a difficult situation. They had money their husbands had left them, but they were fearful of spending this little store. Should they leave? The struggle between Artemio Chauqui and Porfirio Medrano was still going on, and if the latter lost it would be bad for them, for they were outsiders too.

Nobody came along any of the paths, and it was as though the black shadow of the bandit had disappeared from the earth. What had become of Fiero? What had become of Doroteo? March had come and the rains were not so frequent. The meadows were not so marshy, and the cows, standing belly-deep in the tender, green rushes, ate them voraciously. Along the hillside bleated a herd of sheep, whose wool had grown thicker than ever with the cold, and the horses climbed, neighing, to the high ridges. The barley gave a pleasant touch of green to the landscape and the quinua had taken on the gray color of maturity.

There were days when the black mirror of Lake Yananahui glittered in the sun, the mountain peaks pushed aside their curtain of clouds, and the sky, at moments, was again a deep-blue bowl. The men came out of their stone huts more frequently and walked around the slopes and even splashed through the swampy plains. This was unquestionably a new life, as hard and unyielding as the stone, and the body rejoiced at having triumphed over it, sure now of its aptitude and strength.

For Paula and Casiana the heights were no problem. They had grown up in the severity of the highland desert and Yananahui just took them back to their first climate. It was the whip that had made them suffer before, and now they were afraid of losing their place in the community. Paula hoped her husband would come back to the earth and love the furrow once more. Casiana, the night she saw Fiero in the cave and then at the head of his mounted band, giving orders, realized that this was his life and that the earth would never again win him back. But the eyes of the two women were now anxiously fixed on the distant hills where the future of their lives was riding about. What would become of them all?

One afternoon a thunderstorm of rifle reports came bounding from range to range, from peak to peak, down to the village. It seemed to come from far away. All the villagers looked out of the doors of their houses, up to the jagged embattlements. The wind helped carry the sound and the battle seemed to be coming nearer. The wife of Jeronimo Cahua was crying, Condorumi's started to climb the hill in the hope of seeing something, and Paula and Casiana stood by in that sorrowful silence they had learned from the day they were born. For the first time the distant fighting of bandits disturbed the community. Before, the arrival of Fiero had constituted a picturesque note, and they had only learned about the recent attack on Umay when it was over. As for the death of Mardoqueo and El Manco, this was so involved in the general misfortune that it was left behind with all the unpleasant burden of those days.

But here the shooting was beginning once more, and the lives of three villagers were being risked in the struggle. The same machine gun that had drilled simple Mardoqueo and the bandit was beginning to sear the hills. Afterward, like a tempest that has spent itself, the noise began to die down, then flared up again, and at last faded away in the silence of the night. It was a bitter night of anxiety for the women, who sat up, resting against the hollow wall of darkness, their ears alert to every sound. There was only the moaning of the wind.

The day dawned, like every day, thickly blanketed with fog, and when this lifted, there was nobody to be seen on the roads. At noon the hills began to thunder once more, but faintly and at long intervals. It would be the troopers pursuing the decimated band. And that night, when it was darkest, came the quickest, most intense shots of all. The shadows shivered in dread, and in Casiana's womb the child quickened and moved as though it could feel the struggle.

Nothing more was heard for two days, and on the third a man was

seen climbing down the slopes of El Alto. He was not following a path. He had come along the mountain ridge until he was in front of the village and then he started toward the fields almost as the crow flies, only swerving when the steepness of a cliff made it impossible for him to go on.

Casiana said to Paula:

"It's Valencio, it's Valencio. That's the way he walks."

She called out to the wives of Jeronimo and Condorumi, and the four of them in a group, with their children and their relatives, set out to meet him. Other villagers came to see what had happened, and the group grew bigger. The rest, whose attention had been attracted by the noise, watched from their doors. The man reached the pasture fields and calmly walked into the water. There were places where it reached his waist, others, his ankles. He stopped for a moment to look at a bed of rushes, pulled up a handful of the shoots, threw them into the air, and came on, giving a cow a kindly slap on the flank as he passed her. He was being too calm and full of fun in a moment of such anxiety, and the wife of Jeronimo began to shout to him:

"Hurry . . . hurry up!"

Valencio raised his head, saw the group that had gathered, and began to walk faster. He left bubbles and ripples on the surface of the water. He came up the hill at great strides and Casiana and Paula hurried toward him. Valencio seemed very much surprised at the welcome he was receiving. He did not speak to his sisters, but stood looking in amazement at the group and at the villagers gathered at their doorways. What was the meaning of all this fuss? With his sisters clinging to his arms he came toward the group. He was carrying a rifle on one shoulder and a knapsack on the other.

"Are they alive?" shouted the wife of Condorumi, referring to the villagers.

"Some are dead," answered Valencio, looking steadily with his little gray eyes, shaded by the brim of his torn hat.

"Who? Who?"

"There are several."

Casiana, who knew him better, began to question him the right way.

"Fiero Vasquez?"

"Alive."

"Doroteo Quispe?"

"He's alive too."

"Jeronimo Cahua?"

"He's alive, too, with a wound in the leg."

"Eloy Condorumi?"

"He's alive too."

By this time many people had gathered around, and faces were calm once more.

"Who are dead?"

"Several of our men and some of the overseers."

Some of those who had been listening from the start began to laugh.

"How bad is the wound?" asked Jeronimo's wife.

"Not so bad, but he'll be lame."

The sisters made their way through the crowd, leading Valencio to their hut, and went in, followed by Jeronimo's wife and Condorumi's. Valencio stood his gun in the corner, felt around in his knapsack, and pulled out a blue parcel.

"Wife of Condorumi?" The woman held out her hands and he gave it to her saying, "Your husband sent it for your expenses."

"What expenses?"

"He said expenses."

With the same words he gave Jeronimo's wife a red parcel, and handed the knapsack over to his sisters.

"And what has happened, what has been going on?"

"Just a fight, a fight with the overseer police."

Valencio took the gourd of potatoes and the other of ocas they had prepared for him and began to eat slowly, looking at the inquisitive crowd watching him from the door. When he had emptied the two gourds he stretched out right where he was, on the bare ground, to the amazement of the onlookers, and was asleep in no time. It was plain that Valencio was behind with his sleep because it was not dark yet.

Finally the busybodies drifted away and Paula and Casiana began to look through the knapsack. There were fine handkerchiefs in it, cloth, and money, lots of money, gold pounds and silver soles. They hid it all in a corner, under a tub turned upside down, and at night they sent for Clemente Yacu. They talked in front of the sleeper who looked as though he would go on sleeping for a long time. The mayor told them Doroteo owed the community thirty soles. Paula brought out handfuls of money and, as Clemente knew most about numbers, he counted out the thirty soles to cover the debt and fifty, besides, which the sisters were giving for the defense of good old Rosendo.

Valencio's poncho was stained with blood and there was an overpowering stench about him. He breathed loudly and every now and then muttered, "Oh, a blue overseer." His face was almost black, and his usual expression of ferocity and stupidity disappeared when, as now, his eyes were closed. He woke up the afternoon of the following day and Casiana asked him:

"Are you going away?"

"Staying here."

"What did Fiero say?"

"To stay with you and work."

His sister, after a long, thorough cross-examination, managed to get out of him that the mounted police had attacked furiously the first day and the bandits had to flee. Then they returned at Fiero's suggestion, in two groups. One pretended to advance against the police from a certain point, and the police prepared to defend themselves on that side during the night. But, in the meantime, the other group fell upon them from the back, in a swift, hard attack. Powerful Condorumi managed to steal the machine gun, and they had thrown it into a lake a little smaller than Yananahui. They had fled to the south, leaving five dead and carrying four wounded with them. Then they had sent him to the community. He did not know how many losses the police had suffered. That was all. As a matter of fact, although Valencio did

not know this, they had sent him away because he had shown once more such absolute indifference to danger and such recklessness that he was dangerous not only to himself but to all.

Valencio wrapped up his rifle in a blanket and hid it in the thatch of the roof. Then he went to the lake, washed his poncho, and spread it on a rock to dry. He came back to the village, his broad thorax with its thick muscles and dark skin bare to the wind, and as the villagers saw him pass, they called out:

"How are you, Valencio?"

And so began his life in the village. His dull head understood some things, others brushed by his ears and his eyes without his grasping them.

The rainy season came to an end and Father Mestas came to celebrate the feast of Saint Isidore. The villagers built two columns of stone beside the chapel, laid a beam across them, and hung their bell from it. The bell went ding, dong, ding, dong, cheerily, and the hills answered—or were they ringing bells up there too? They drank chicha at the feast and Valencio drank, too, and fell asleep. And his sister said to him, "Come to mass," and he went and kneeled down, because that was what everybody did, and the priest drank something out of a big cup, and then scolded them because they had not painted Saint Isidore and did not build him a big house where they could all get in. They promised him that they would do it, but now they had a lot of expense with this new misfortune of Rosendo's imprisonment; and the priest said, "May God bless you," and Valencio did not know who God was and he thought maybe he was a leader more powerful than Fiero Vasquez.

One day the overseer police came and Valencio wanted to get his gun and attack them, but Paula said, "Don't do anything," and he sat there in front of the hut. The overseers searched all through the village for bandits, but they did not find any.

As one of them passed by Valencio he looked at him and said:

"What are these half-witted Indians going to do?"

Valencio did not know what half-witted meant, but they had not intended to insult them because if they had they would have called them donkeys.

And now Valencio began to feel the need of a woman, and he

understood this because one night he came upon a couple panting in the tall grass and the coward Inocencio had explained things to him because they were friends, and he wanted to make Tadea have a baby, like Casiana who was having Fiero's baby. Tadea was Inocencio's sister and the first time he could get her outside the village he was going to lay her. Casiana would soon be giving birth to the baby and that was why Fiero had sent him. Besides, he had a special thing to do that he hadn't told to anybody, not even Inocencio to whom he told everything while they pastured the cows, and he liked cows better than he did sheep. The pastures had dried off now and he rode a horse, bareback and without a bridle, and he drove in the stock and the villagers said, "He's a good rider."

He liked to go over by the lakes, too, where there was a great bed of rushes and ducks, and he went at night so they would not fly away; and when he caught one he would give it a twist and break its neck, or else he would kill it by biting through its neck, and suck the blood, and the blood of the duck was very good. His sisters said to him, "That lake is enchanted, be careful nothing happens to you for going there"; but they cooked the ducks and they were very good with potatoes. And they said it was bad to go around the old, fallen-down houses because of a certain Chacho, and he went there to see if he could see him but he never did; and it was probably because Chacho was so lazy that he did nothing but sleep. What he liked most was to climb up Rumi and look and look, and also to learn the paths so that as soon as Casiana's child gave its first cry ... that was what Fiero had told him.

And now they harvested the quinua and then came the reaping of the barley, and the threshing was fun; but everybody said it wasn't like the wheat threshing because they did not have enough horses or chicha. And he rode bareback shouting and he had a little chicha, and he thought everything was fine and that people complained because they had nothing better to do.

One afternoon, when it was getting dark, he saw Tadea, carrying a yellow gourd, going to the canal that ran behind the old houses for water. She made a detour not to have to pass the houses and he caught her and threw her down in a hollow. At first she fought him off and then she gave in, and he learned how warm and sweet a woman can be, and his body had its satisfaction. And then he felt happy and she told him that now they were man and wife and they would have to tell Inocencio. The cowherd laughed and said all right, and that they would have to wait until the Saint's feast came around again, so the priest could marry them and the community would build them a house. And that was how it would be, for they were building five new

houses for those who had got married, and he helped, and at night he met Tadea in a hollow on the hillside and everything was good.

There was an assembly and the people began to talk and they wanted to put out Porfirio and all those who had come from somewhere else, and Valencio said, "Do you mean me?" and they all laughed and the result was that they didn't put anybody out. And Porfirio said he had noticed that the drainage ditch from the lake could be deepened, and that they ought to dig a channel through the meadow which flooded because the water had no way to drain off; and then they'd be able to plow up and plant the meadow. But Chauqui had said it was best to leave things as they had always been, and that Porfirio wanted to harm the community by making the lake mad and that the black woman might come out. Valencio thought that she had never come out when he went to catch ducks, but perhaps she stayed in the deep part because he always went in on the side of the rocks that looked toward Muncha where there were nests. And he never saw the woman, because she probably lived farther back, but they were cowards if they were afraid of a woman, and he was going to keep on going there for ducks, and if she bothered him, he'd lay her the way he had Tadea.

The weather was beautiful, only many of the villagers were grieving about Rosendo who did not get out of prison, and Ambrosio Luma said they would have to make mats and burn lime to sell. So everybody began to weave mats and burn stones almost blue to make the lime, and they took them into town to sell. Valencio learned to weave and burn lime and he said he didn't want money but bread, and so they gave him a knapsack full of bread and he gave Tadea some and the bread was so good.

At night the sky was clear and the moon rolled by and stars twinkled and the children went to the fields and shouted joyfully, "Moon, m-o-o-n"; and he remembered how unhappy his childhood had been and he saw that nobody was whipped here and everything was good. Then came shearing time and he sheared, too, and no overseer came to take away the wool, but it stayed in the community. And Tadea told him she was going to make him a poncho, and he said he wanted it purple with red and green stripes and she made it that way and it was very pretty and everything was good, and if anybody complained it was because he wanted to be a bother.

Casiana was almost ready to have her baby and he was very happy with Tadea and his new poncho, and he was making more mats because he wanted to buy Tadea some percale for a dress.

The hills were very high, and the sky very clear and the lake gleamed like Tadea's eyes, and everything was good.

14

Doroteo Quispe, Bandit

One night in June there arose against the black sky a trembling flame like a star. Valencio, following his orders, had lighted a signal fire on the Rumi ridge to announce to the expectant eyes of twenty bandits the birth of Casiana's son.

The flame flickered for an hour, two hours, for Valencio had heaped up a great pile of wood and straw. Anyone who might have seen it in the distance, from that vast world of cliffs enveloped in darkness, would have thought it was some shepherd protecting himself from the cold or some belated traveler preparing his food.

Fiero Vasquez could not see it now. None of his men could see it now. He was a prisoner, and they were decimated, dispersed, in flight. While the flame burned Fiero slept between four walls—it could just as well have been in a wooden coffin or on the ground, the prey of the vultures—like every bandit who loses a fight. Doroteo, meanwhile, keeping stubbornly in the game, trotted north. He was followed by Eloy Condorumi, a fellow nicknamed Blue-Eyes, the Lawyer, and Emilio Laguna. Jeronimo Cahua was no longer with them, for he had lost his life in the fight.

The band of horsemen cleaved the thick silence of the night with their hoofbeats. Doroteo, like those who followed him, rode with his head sunk on his chest. How were they to see the high, distant fire? It did not interest them, anyway. There was room in their breasts only for hatred. The darkness made it impossible to see the deep cut on Doroteo's forehead he had received in his fight with the Toad, but it did make it possible to guess at the gleam of his enraged, tortured eyes. They had managed to get away at the last minute when everything seemed lost. Jeronimo Cahua had died in his arms, and they had to leave his corpse there in the middle of the field, otherwise the police would have caught them all. Doroteo thought about his friend, the good villager, the faithful companion, and in his breast burned a wound that could only be assuaged with blood.

After riding two days, changing their horses for others they stole as they went by the ranches, they arrived within sight of Rumi. Their first idea was to go to the village. But what were they going to say to Jeronimo Cahua's wife? And for that matter what could Doroteo and

Condorumi say to their own wives? All they could tell were misfortunes and, if they were seen, they might compromise the community. They had lost all the bundles of merchandise that Fiero had intended to sell to a storekeeper in a certain province. They had no money. So it was better not to go. Besides, lying just as close as the village was the district of Muncha, and there lived one of the greatest culprits.

They hid in a hollow and Doroteo said to Blue-Eyes:

"You are to go to Muncha. When you get to Zenobio Garcia's place you go in and have a few drinks, and you look around and see if he is there. Stay there till late so as to be sure he's not going away. All right, then you buy a couple of bottles of brandy, which we need badly enough."

They gave him the best horse of the lot, Blue-Eyes left his gun behind, and about the middle of the afternoon he dismounted in front of Zenobio Garcia's place, with the kindliest air that could be imagined.

In that colorless desert, consumed by thirst, choking with dust and the fumes of brandy, Rosa Estela's pots of carnations lavished color and fragrance from their place on the porch. She sat there behind her flowers watching the square with her ecstatic eyes, a smile hovering over her carnation-like mouth, as though she were waiting for somebody. She was waiting for the dream lover who never arrived. Her parents had brought her up to believe that because of her beauty there was in store for her a future far superior to any the young men of Muncha could offer her. The thought of her triumph made her contemptuous not only of the men, but even of the women of Muncha. Poor drunkards, poor drawers of water!

Things had been going very well for the Garcias until the matter of Rumi came up. Don Alvaro Amenabar himself had visited Zenobio twice to talk over his "affairs," and a son of Don Alvaro, Don Fernando, often came to see Rosa Estela to chat pleasantly and to sing. She played the guitar and he sang songs of love. It looked as though he were going to propose any minute. Why not? thought Rosa Estela's parents. She was lovely, and beauty for money was a fair trade. To her it was a foregone conclusion.

But time went by, the eviction took place, and reality dealt its staggering blows. Don Alvaro did not keep any of his promises; on the contrary, he had nothing more to do with Zenobio, and then he ordered that sudden, exorbitant roundup. Don Fernando was seen no

more in Muncha. And to all this must be added the indignation of the inhabitants to whom Zenobio had promised free grazing for their stock and who now, instead, had to pay ten times over. They barely tolerated him as governor and a commission had gone to the capital of the province to see about having him removed. In any case, they left him all alone and they hated him.

Rosa Estela had troubles with her servant. She had threatened to carry no more water for the carnations. That was too much. Señora Garcia prayed and lighted candles to Saint Rita of Casia, Zenobio started drinking heavily, and Rosa Estela stamped the floor with her high heels. But she finally calmed down and, sitting behind her carnations, swayed gently in her rocking chair. That afternoon as she heard the trot of a horse she prepared her sweetest smile, but it turned quickly into a scornful expression when the rider came around the corner, drew up before the house, and dismounted. What a repulsive creature in spite of the beauty of his blue eyes! His hair was very long and matted with dust and his clothes were ragged and dirty. Blue-Eyes threw her an admiring glance, walked across the porch clinking his spurs, and went into the store.

There he sat down in front of the counter, on one of the old boxes that served as chairs, and ordered half a bottle of brandy and a glass. He began to drink appreciatively, taking small sips, smacking his lips, and saying the liquor was very good. The clerk who served the liquor and two customers sitting at the other end of the counter were a little taken aback at the strange appearance of the new arrival.

“Where do you come from?” asked the clerk, politely.

"From Uyumi, but I've been away from there for years. Now I'm riding around looking for work. Don Alvaro offered me something..."

"Hm..."

"Is Don Zenobio here?" inquired the stranger, after taking another sip. "They tell me he does a lot of distilling and I've worked at that."

"I'll call him," said the clerk, and disappeared through a door that led to the back.

In a little while Zenobio Garcia appeared, in his shirt sleeves, sweaty, red-faced, looking more like a water jug than ever. He talked at length with the stranger about distilling, listened to his proposition, and then said no. For the moment he had all the workers he could use, but he was glad to know he was in those parts and he would get in touch

with him if he needed him. Blue-Eyes gave him his name. Señora Garcia, who was very inquisitive, had appeared for a moment at the back door of the store. The bandit understood immediately where the young lady on the porch got her looks. This faded woman, with her beauty in ruins, must have been lovely in her youth. The strange thing was why she had married Garcia. The bandit did not know that he had courted her in Celendin, where the women are famous for their beauty, making her believe that he was a rancher and had lots of money. The woman watched the man at the bar with close interest, while she pretended to give the clerk suggestions about things to be done in the store.

"Over there, where that gentleman is sitting, you ought to put in some more seats."

And finally she called to Miss Rosa Estela who came through the room, holding a fringed shawl about her and swaying a little as she walked.

Zenobio went off to his work, and Blue-Eyes, because it was late and he had finished his bottle of brandy, bought two bottles to take away with him and told the clerk that he intended to become a regular customer. Afterward, when the clerk and the workmen had gone home, the Garcias began to talk about the suspicious-looking drinker.

"Didn't you notice, Zenobio," the wife reproached her husband, "that that man looked like a monster, like a bandit?"

"There you go again. For months now every person that has come in here to drink has looked like a bandit to you. From the way that man talks he really knows about distilling and he seems to want to work."

"What if he is one of Fiero Vasquez's band? He looks like a bandit."

"They chased Fiero away to the south. The other day they sent in the militia and that outlaw is probably dead by now."

"I don't know, I don't know, but I feel as though something was going to happen."

"Oh, stop being a nuisance. They're not going to bother me."

"Oh, Zenobio, look what they did at Umay."

"That's all over now. And, anyway, I've got my rifle there, a sad but useful souvenir of Amenabar. I'll show you how I can take care of

three or four of them by myself, and the neighbors can do something too."

"Oh, Zenobio, Zenobio!"

"Will you stop bothering me!" shouted Zenobio, half-angry, half-frightened, as he put out the fire under his metal still.

It was midnight as the bandits approached the town. Doroteo pulled up his horse and said:

"In case anything happens to me I want you to know what to do. You, Lawyer, and you, Emilio Laguna, are to go to town, to that tavern you know, and get in touch with the boss. Condorumi and Blue-Eyes are to head north to get what money they can. If either of you gets killed, it doesn't matter; the other one is to go on and do as we've said. If I come out safe I'll go with Blue-Eyes and Condorumi and you let us know what Fiero wants done. Come on, now, we'll go in firing shots one right after the other so they'll think there are a lot of us; we'll attack the house, and kill Zenobio and steal everything. And that Rosa Estela, I'm to have her first."

Doroteo set off at a gallop and the others followed. The shots deafened the night and the frightened inhabitants of Muncha believed they were a numerous band. The bandits attacked Zenobio's house, breaking in the door of the store with their gunstocks. The smashing of the boards was heard all through the town. The governor could not even manage to lay his hands on his gun. He pulled on his pants and fled to the barn. Two bandits hurried after the pale, fleeing spot, firing at it. Zenobio got to the barnyard wall, jumped over it, then over another, and began to run through the fields. His pursuers kept after him.

He was now up the dusty hillside, stumbling against the low, rough bushes. His heart was going like a trip hammer in his fat breast and his breath choked him. He was panting so hard that he could run no farther. The hill sloped down and was covered with rocks and rough stones that hurt his feet. A bullet struck a rock close behind him, spattering fragments of it over him, and he slipped down a little hollow. He had fallen into an opening between some big stones and there he huddled, his face and his body bleeding where he had scratched them as he fell down the rocks. He was terrified and the

men were right there looking for him and firing off their guns. He realized that they could not see him and he felt a spark of hope. He flattened himself down in the cavity and held his breath. The pebbles rattled and rolled down as the men looked around the slope, and then finally they went back. The night was very black and more shots could be heard in the distance. He was afraid to come out and, at the same time, he was worried about his family and his property.

Back in the house Rosa Estela had lighted the lamp and was getting dressed to run away when her door was burst open. The girl's scream of terror died away in her throat. There stood Doroteo Quispe, with his bushy thatch of hair, his low forehead scarred by a deep cut, his little eyes glittering with hate and lust, his hooked nose, and his thick lips pulled back from his fierce teeth, so long that they looked like tusks. He was a wild animal ready to spring. Doroteo came forward with his dagger in his hand and Rosa Estela, overcome by terror, fell back on the bed. The lamp threw its golden light on her beautiful, pale body. The other rooms echoed with shots and the screams of Señora Garcia and the servant.

When all was quiet and Zenobio plucked up courage to return he found the women moaning, and the chest wide open, and the five thousand soles he kept in it gone. Everything was smashed to pieces and destroyed. From the barrels that had been punctured by bullets the brandy was running out over the floor.

The neighbors, who had not lifted a finger to help because of their fear of the bandits and their dislike for Garcia and his family, came in, hypocritically distressed, with the one purpose of finding out everything that had happened. Oh, what a misfortune! The coils of the stills were broken, there was no liquor left in the barrels, and Rosa Estela's bed was stained with blood. And they had lost their money too. Oh, what a calamity!

The servant left. The next day, in the morning, Señora Garcia knelt before the image of Saint Rita of Casia, praying in a heartbroken voice. Rosa Estela, silent and pale, carrying a water jug, waited her turn in the line at the spring, and Zenobio started mending his stills and his barrels. His gloomy thoughts made it impossible for him to do his work well. He would lose the governorship for running away, he did not have a cent left, his distillery was ruined, and Rosa Estela would never be able to make a good marriage. He had struggled his whole life in this desert, saving his money penny by penny, married to a woman who never forgave him for lying to her, trusting in his daughter's beauty and his own foxiness. And now it had all been in

vain, and his heart began to dry up inside of him like the parched earth around him, and nothing gave him satisfaction any more. In one corner stood several bottles of brandy, the only things that had come through the tragedy unscathed. Zenobio noisily drank half of one bottle, and, then, after a moment, the other half. What was the sense of struggling in this miserable world? He threw down the coil he was trying to fix, kicked over the barrel, and went on drinking. . . .

Day after day Doroteo Quispe and his followers vainly lay in wait in the highlands to which they had fled. Indians passed by, defenseless women, people who looked destitute. Quispe, no matter how badly he needed money, always spared the Indians. In this he did not follow the example of his leader, Fiero Vasquez, who had once held up Doroteo himself. The scars of the Indians' sufferings were still raw in him, and he understood. Of the five thousand soles they had stolen from Garcia, they sent four thousand to Fiero who had to get a lawyer and, if it was possible, escape. The rest they divided up between them. Sometimes they approached a traveler for food and they paid him for it. Sometimes they went to a shepherd's hut asking for a pot of boiled potatoes and they paid for that too. Travelers and shepherds passed from terror to surprise, asking themselves: what kind of men are these? You only had to look at them to see that they were highwaymen and horse thieves and yet they paid like honest people. Why? Their appearance was certainly not reassuring. One was as awkward and ugly as a bear, another was huge and clumsy, and the one with the blue eyes was unspeakably dirty and ragged. They were well-mounted and armed, and God only knows what had happened to them to make them behave like that. Life is full of the queerest things! Blue-Eyes' behavior, had he been on his own, would not have occasioned such speculations, and in his heart he laughed at what he called his comrades' sentimentality. But Doroteo had become very quick with the knife and Condorumi was as strong as a bull, so he kept his difference of viewpoint to himself.

Meanwhile, poor travelers passed, condors passed, the wind passed, and time passed, and they went on waiting for an opportunity that seemed as though it would never come. Until one afternoon the bear gave a growl:

"Look!"

In the distance down a winding path rode a tall horseman flanked on

both sides by two huge saddlebags.

"It looks like the Magician," said Blue-Eyes.

"It is," answered Condorumi.

They mounted and set out at a gallop, devouring the distance and the dust. It really was the Magician and now they were close to him and now they had come up with him. When he saw them he pulled up his nag.

"Hello, Magician," said Doroteo in a friendly voice to gain time, so that his lieutenants could station themselves alongside the Magician. "We've been waiting for you, but it looked as though you were never going to get here."

"Who are you and why are you waiting for me?" inquired the Magician, trying to get his bearings, though he was beginning to suspect from the guns and the scar on the man's forehead who they were.

"Fiero Vasquez, who wants you to sell some stuff for him. We belong to the band now."

The Magician relaxed a little and he saw that the villagers' attitude toward him was not what he had suspected. Perhaps they hadn't attached much importance to his testimony. Perhaps Fiero Vasquez had got them to overlook it since his services were so useful. Because the Magician had an arrangement with Fiero to sell the merchandise he stole from the mule trains. When he had heard about the death of Iñiguez and other details, and the disappearance of the overseer who was suspected of being a spy, he began to feel that he was in danger from the Indians, and that perhaps the bandits had learned that their plans had been revealed to Amenabar. So he had decided it might be wise to stay away until the matter had blown over. He went farther north. Now it seemed as though everything were fixed up.

"All right, I'll go," answered the Magician.

"Yes, you'll go right away."

The Magician noticed that Doroteo's sly expression was not in keeping with Condorumi's, which was frankly hostile, nor Blue-Eyes', which was ironical. Doroteo himself, thinking the farce had gone on long enough, burst into a malevolent laugh. The Magician was hemmed in by the bandits and as he realized that he was their prisoner he turned

so pale that his face looked like a white stone instead of a slice of suet. His quick, birdlike eyes darted from one face to the other, hoping to surprise a friendly expression, something that could save him from taking a desperate stand which might prove fatal. He saw nothing but hatred and contempt, and, determined to defend himself to the end, he reached for his revolver. But Condorumi's hand shot out and caught his in a grip like a vise. Blue-Eyes reached around from the other side and pulled the pistol out of the holster which was fastened to the saddle girth. Then Condorumi, with a violent jerk, threw him flat on the ground, while his startled horse galloped off and then stopped, not far away, twitching its ears. The Magician got to his feet quickly, deciding the best plan would be to put up a show of bravery.

"Don't be cowards," he upbraided them. "One at a time, any one of you. You're a bunch of cowards."

He threw off his poncho, getting ready to fight, but Quispe set his horse at him and gave him two cuts with the reins across the back.

"Cowards, did you say? You're the only coward here. After pretending to be our friend you sold us out, and then you informed on Fiero's men to your rich protector. We know all about it, and now you're going to get what's coming to you."

The Magician looked at the ground. There was not even a stone on the road or in the grass.

"Shall I kill him?" asked Blue-Eyes, taking aim with his revolver.

"No, that's too good for him . . . Come on!" said Quispe, thrusting his rifle between the Magician's ribs. Then to Condorumi, "You lead his horse."

They left the path and started across the fields. Quispe prodded the peddler like an animal to make him hurry. And the Magician did not want to hurry. Maybe somebody would appear in the distance. Sometimes travelers joined together to cross dangerous places. That way they could defend themselves. But nobody appeared. The road was deserted. The wide land was utterly alone. The black cliffs looked down on him with a tragic expression and the high grass seemed to moan as he passed. Only the June sky was serenely blue.

They came to a slope covered with rocks and stones and the Magician thought of hitting Doroteo in the forehead with a rock before he died. But Quispe steered their course toward the other side and they descended into a hollow. Now they could not see the road and all his

hopes began to fade. Where were they taking him? At first the Magician thought they were going to push him over some high cliff, but they were coming to a plain and they rode out on it.

"Have you any money?" asked Doroteo.

"There is some in the saddlebags, but most of my money is in a bank in Trujillo."

The Magician had an inspiration.

"Don't kill me," he pleaded. "If you want to, hold me prisoner here while I send for the money from the bank. It will be my ransom: twenty thousand soles . . . Don't lose all that."

"Mm-m," growled Doroteo, and after thinking it over, he answered: "You'd probably play us some kind of a trick, and instead of the money it would be the police that would come. We'll have enough with what you have in the saddlebags and your goods."

The grass grew tall and stiff and the plain gleamed in the sun. An occasional big reddish black boulder, looking like a huge wart, broke the monotony of the landscape. In the distance the hills stood in rows like a procession. Suddenly, on one side of the plain, a swamp loomed up, and they started toward it. Were they going to bury him in it? The Magician thought of running away so that they would shoot and kill him outright rather than make him die in the bogs; but as he looked quickly around he saw Blue-Eyes unrolling his lasso. Those blue eyes pierced him, as menacing as the swamp. Now they were right in front of the black mire, which was covered with a million little holes in which oozy water gleamed. In the middle the water was deeper and had a bluish sheen. There were white bones along the bank and a cow's skull a little farther in, the remains of animals that had walked into it hoping to drink of that blue water. The birds of prey as they devoured their victims had probably carried the bones out and scattered them on the plain. The Magician felt horror and fear, and a chill ran up his legs to the back of his neck. The three bandits were behind him and he stopped at the bank, turning to look at them with supplicating eyes.

"Get in!" Doroteo shouted at him.

"Why don't you shoot me?" begged the Magician.

"Get in, I tell you! You, Condorumi, get off your horse and use your machete to persuade him."

Condorumi got down, pulling out a long machete, and he came toward the Magician holding the sharp blade aloft. The shivering peddler started in, splashing through the mud. His long body in the yellow cotton suit began sinking, sinking, and his frenzied eyes looked first at the men and then at the mud, without finding surcease from his terror. The men looked at him with an expression of ferocious satisfaction and the mud grew greedier and greedier. Condorumi had stayed on the bank, but the Magician stopped as soon as he was out of reach of his machete. But the mud kept giving way and it was now up to his waist. In vain he tried to move to one side or get out, even if the machete did slash him to pieces. His legs were caught fast in the mud and he could not move them. He sank slowly and surely. The more he moved the worse it was. Doroteo was afraid his hat was going to be left floating on the top and he said to him:

"Take off your hat and push it down in the mud."

In his desperation the Magician took off his white straw hat and thrust it into the mud, thinking perhaps that if he did what his enemies wanted they might take pity on him, or else because he had lost all will power and obeyed like an automaton. The foul-smelling, bubbling mud rose eagerly and inexorably toward his breast. He looked at the bandits one last time. He tried to speak, but he could not because his jaws and lips were trembling so.

"Good-bye," laughed Blue-Eyes cruelly.

The Magician paddled with the palms of his hands, childishly trying to hold himself up. And then suddenly, when the mud was up to his shoulders, he stopped sinking. His feet touched something hard, perhaps a rock, perhaps a layer of firm clay. The bandits looked at one another when they saw that he was not sinking any farther. A shorter man than the Magician would have been in the mud up to his nose, suffering the most horrible of torments; but his whole head emerged, a pale, disheveled head, as though it were already dead, whose eyes alone showed all the desperate terror of this death agony. His jaws were now motionless, for the nerves were paralyzed.

"Throw your lasso around him and pull him out," Doroteo ordered Blue-Eyes.

With a dexterous toss, Blue-Eyes threw the noose around the Magician's neck and Condorumi dragged him to the bank, leaving a watery furrow in the bog. He took the lasso off him and the long body lay there inert, like a muddy scrap of meat. But it was still a living

man. He raised his eyes to the bandits and tears rolled down his face.

"Have pity!" he begged.

"Pity? Did you ever have pity on anybody in your life?"

The Magician quickly reviewed his life and it was all a long accusation: he had never had pity. Since the time he had tortured the little dove with the broken wing until he had taken part in the search for runaway Indians, and helped throw a whole village into poverty and probably death from the work in the mines, he had never, never known pity. Then the idea of dying became more comprehensible, though he could not be resigned to it. He had gone completely to pieces, and there was not a trace of bravery left in him. He was weeping tragically.

"Now, Condorumi, let's see how strong you are," said Doroteo. "Throw him way in."

Condorumi picked him up by the back of the neck and the belt, balanced him twice, and then with a swift, violent motion, flung him in. The Magician fell ten yards farther in with a dull thud and sank rapidly in the soft slime. The mud closed over him, bubbling convulsively. It even seemed as though there had been a shriek which was choked off. But it was quickly over and the mire became calm again. Only a few bubbles rose and lingered on the surface for a time before they burst, and at last the black, watery bog lay quiet as before.

The bandits, without saying a word, started to ride away. A coriquinga was looking for food under the patches of dung, the wind whistled through the high grass, and the distant peaks scraped the sky. Over the plains and over the bogs time descended with the slowness of thousands of years.

15

The Death of Rosendo Maqui

Rosendo Maqui had no way of reckoning the time he had been in prison. Perhaps one year, perhaps two. Or, as far as that goes, it might have been only six months. Time goes very slowly in prison, if one thinks of the day one lives and the days one must still live in the shadow of its walls. When the time has passed it is an incommensurable span, full of sorrow but devoid of incidents, which are, after all, the landmarks of the past. For Rosendo the days, each one like the other, tended to merge into a single mass, with only the vaguest differentiation, such as the dreary episodes of the trial, the release or death of some of the prisoners, or the entrance of new ones, until they, too, and their histories came to form part of the prison routine. But life realizes that it is essentially frustrated and understands that all this is nothing and the days pass and pass and pass again, forming time that is really lost. How much? The calendar marks the dates. Man feels as though he were looking back at a long, benighted road, worn by the feet of weary suffering.

For the prisoners, and, above all, for Rosendo, the entrance of Fiero Vasquez was a memorable date. But, little by little, when they heard him, became acquainted with him, learned what had happened to him, he, too, slowly came to form a part of the long, benighted road.

Rosendo had other memories of prison. Correa Zavala fought bravely to defend him. The branding expert pointed out that Casimiro Rosas' brand was very new and must have been put on the black bull recently, otherwise the scar would have shown different characteristics. Nobody could prove that Rosendo had incited Mardoqueo to murder nor that he had been the accomplice of Fiero Vasquez or had harbored him. So, to keep him from being released, they tried him for sedition before a military court. Correa Zavala felt very downhearted.

Rosendo said to him:

"Don't feel badly; this is no surprise to me. I told you when we first talked that I hoped for nothing from the law. When I was on the land, working in the fields, I trusted everybody. Since I came here, well . . . I hope you have better luck with the other Indians."

Honorio was carried out, dead, on a burlap sack. He looked like a human cross of suffering. They had covered his face with a hat, but his yellow, fleshless hands and feet were like a gesture of protest. When Correa Zavala came with the order for his release, happy at having secured it, he was no longer there.

Jacinto Prieto got out alive, at least. His son had worked hard and had even prevailed upon Zurdo to withdraw his charges; but the judge had said there was other testimony against him and that the trial would have to proceed, because the law could not go into reverse to sanction crimes that had been proven. Somebody suggested to Jacinto that he would undoubtedly be set free if he wrote a letter to La Patria—a newspaper that was beginning to circulate in the province with the compliments of Oscar Amenabar—praising the scrupulous conduct of the authorities. Jacinto remembered how he had shouted against the injustices of the judge and the subprefect, and he answered that he would not write a word. He pounded his breast with a defiant air, and added that he had been born a man who would never condone abuses. And then, very optimistically, he began to compose a long letter to the President of the Republic "in person."

"Ah, Rosendo," he whispered, not to be overheard by possible informers, and to have the letter intercepted, "I have written telling him all about my case and what I have seen. I haven't omitted a detail. The president will have to read it, won't he? I've told him, too, that I advised my son to fulfill his military service, that I have always loved my country, and that, in spite of so much injustice, I still love her, though at times it makes me suffer to see how she lets the poor be treated. Tell me, old man, don't you think the president will listen to an honest, well-meaning voice that comes from the people? I think there are going to be changes, you will see. The trouble is that nobody has told the president all this, and he is being deceived by those who want things to go on the way they are, and who tell him everything is fine. You'll see, you'll see, Rosendo. What do you think? Why are you so quiet? You act as though you were dead. . . ."

A little later, on Sunday, the blacksmith received through his son an elegant card bearing on the upper left-hand corner the seal of Peru in colors, and below, the inscription: Office of the President of the Republic. A secretary advised Jacinto that the president had noted the contents of his letter and that the remarks contained therein had been called to the attention of the superior authorities concerned. The terms employed in the letter were polite and, altogether, Prieto was highly flattered. With the card in his hand, he said to Rosendo:

"You see. This is what happens when you speak out and go to the man at the top. Who are the superior authorities? The ministers. The president will say to them: What have you done about the matter I called to your attention? Clean the undesirables out of the administration. Of course, I say undesirables out of politeness. What I mean is thieves and scoundrels. You'll see the changes that are going to take place, Rosendo. There will be an investigation, you know, and I will instruct people to speak up and tell the truth. . . ."

Time went on and nothing of what Jacinto was hoping for came about.

One of the few who was released was the swindler Absalon Quinez. As he left he said jail was only for fools. Several days later he managed to have the goatherd, Pedro, with whom he had become very thick, set free. Prieto, on the other hand, received notice that he was to be taken to the capital of the province to appear before the Criminal Court. It was then that he exploded, shouting furiously:

"Lies . . . lies . . . it's all lies. There is no justice, there is no country. Where are the upright men the nation needs? They are all out for what they can get, bootlickers at the orders of the mighty. A rich man can kill and nothing happens to him. A poor man gives someone a stiff punch and they accuse him of attempted homicide. Where is the equality before the law? I don't believe in anything now; let them kill me if they want to."

The shrieks of Jacinto Prieto filled the jail and overflowed into the street.

"Let them condemn me. I'll get out some day. I'll make knives, I'll make daggers, and I'll give them to the people. I'll fix up dynamite. Let the whole business blow up. Fiero Vasquez is put in jail. At least he runs risks. They are criminals and thieves who steal in office under cover of the law—exploiters of the people. And the country permits it and upholds them. What is the country? What good is it to me? That's what I want somebody to tell me. The day we run the thieves and bloodsuckers through, that day we'll have a country. I'll do my part: I'll take care of a few thieves in disguise."

The troopers went in to make him keep quiet, hitting him with their gunstocks. Prieto defended himself in one corner of his cell like a bull harried by a pack, but he was finally overpowered by numbers, and dropped senseless to the ground. They dragged him to the punishment cell and tied him between posts in such a way that he could neither sit

down nor stand up.

When Prieto came out he was very depressed and for days he kept to himself, talking with nobody in his block or in the courtyard. His step was not so firm and he gave the impression that his shoes were a weight on his feet. Fiero Vasquez called him aside and said to him:

"My friend, a letter to the papers won't do you a bit of good, and you'll only suffer for it. But money will do the trick. I'm going to give you a thousand soles and they'll forget all you've said and let you out."

Jacinto answered:

"Thank you, but it is hard to give up the idea of getting justice."

A week later he went home like a man who had been devoured by jail.

The situation of the other prisoners remained unchanged. Some new ones were brought in, and for a few days they told their stories. The principal reason they found listeners was because, through them, the others caught a glimpse of the outside world, the world of liberty. It was poor and meager, but it was as dear to them as the little time they were allowed to spend in the sun behind the walls. But the new prisoners became saturated with prison, and after a few days there was nothing left but the monotony.

Rosendo considered his existence as a prisoner and found it absolutely sterile, devoid of any creative act. Once the old villager, Rosario, with her wrinkles, her stooped back, and her ever-growing fatigue, came to see him. She went to all this trouble in his honor, and the old mayor appreciated it with all his heart. His little grandson could say everything now, and he ran about pretending to herd the cattle.

One day they put Fiero Vasquez in the same cell with Rosendo. From number 4 he was transferred to number 2. The authorities were treating them as joint defendants and, by putting the villager and the bandit together, they hoped to envelop Rosendo and the whole community in the same criminal, guilty atmosphere. Those who have been in jail know that the transfer of prisoners is often an indication of what is happening in the realm of stamped paper. Fiero Vasquez was accused of every murder, holdup, and robbery that had taken place in the whole region for years. He was even accused of the theft of the brief. But they were unable to prove anything against him.

When questioned about the merchandise found in his possession, he said he had bought it from Julio Contreras, known as the Magician. The judge ordered the latter to appear as a witness but he was nowhere to be found. Fiero gave his testimony quietly but in that authoritative tone of his, as though demanding that it be given credence. The judge, knowing that he had him in his power, did not question him too closely. There were moments when his attitude seemed to say, "I'm not the one who's after you. It's Amenabar. Why did you side with the villagers?" At the same time, for greater safety and to justify the trial of Rosendo for sedition, they accused Vasquez of this crime too. He had participated in the "movement" of Rumi, and one of his men had been killed in it. After the hearing he was taken back again to the old mayor's cell. They were accomplices.

Fiero Vasquez, weatherbeaten from exposure and, as always, dressed in black, would have been invisible in the dark cell had it not been for the gleam of his good eye and the whiteness of the other and the brilliance of his teeth when he smiled. His warm, strong voice won Rosendo to him, and the old man finally decided that he was a man who had once been good. At times it seemed as though he sloughed off all his crimes and became once more the boy who had gathered cow dung to help support his mother. However, the powerful, dynamic personality of Fiero Vasquez so filled the twelve-by-fifteen foot cell that all the old man had left to himself was his bed. Rosendo understood that this was the natural triumph of strength, and he sat quietly on his bed, chewing his coca. They got along well, but it would not be true to say that they became intimate.

"Old man," exclaimed Fiero, "if you could have seen the attack on Umay! As far away as we were we could hear the screams of Doña Leonor and her daughters and the other women around the place. The truth is, it was the overseers who fought. We didn't even lay eyes on Don Alvaro, for all he seems so bold. . . ."

"Yes," answered Rosendo, "and what did it get you? The death of two overseers, that is to say, poor folks like us, who don't realize what they're doing."

"You're too considerate, Rosendo. That is your mistake. We must attack without pity."

"To kill off the poor, the rich defend themselves with other poor devils."

"To hell with the poor if they're stupid."

The conversation languished.

The thing that Rosendo came to admire in Fiero was his ability to win people over to him. Without using the threat of his followers—which he did only on rare occasions—his influence in the jail kept growing. The jailer, on the excuse that the bandit was to be questioned, took him to his own office so that he might be alone with his visitors. The troopers brought messages to him and bought things for him. One told him that there were several among them who were receiving money from Oscar Amenabar to keep special watch over him.

More than his money, it was his bravery, his serenity in the face of adversity, and, beyond doubt, some current of attraction that formed part of his make-up that won them to him. As a matter of fact he did not have much money. He always divided it up generously with his men, and spent his share freely. Of the four thousand soles Doroteo had sent him he gave a thousand to Jacinto Prieto, another thousand to Correa Zavala to defend him, and the rest slipped away among the other prisoners, the police, and certain people on the outside who did things for him. Later he received another thousand soles and the news of the death of the Magician. This money went the same way as the other, but the news lasted longer and he relished it for many days. Part of the money went to Casiana who came to visit him every so often, bringing the baby. Out of another remittance he carefully put away two hundred soles, which he resolved not to touch under any circumstances, as it was for a very special purpose.

One day the jailer came to tell him there was a new visitor there to see him.

"A woman?" inquired Fiero.

"It's a woman, but I didn't ask her what her name was."

The bandit said to Rosendo, with deep feeling:

"Something tells me it's Gumercinda."

He was away for two hours.

"It was Gumercinda, Rosendo, my wife, my real wife, the one I had in Tuco. You remember? I think I told you. She was in jail too. When she heard I had been caught she came all the way from Cajabamba. I can't begin to tell you all she told me. Thank God she got over her sickness, and when she left the judge's house she married a shoemaker. She has had a hard time and she's worn out. The poor thing cried and I wasn't

far from it. When I took her in my arms I felt as though I were embracing the happy years I lived with her. She wanted to stay and take care of me and leave the husband she's married to now. I didn't let her; I told her to go back, and to live happy, knowing that I would always love her, though we could never come together again because that would only bring her suffering. I gave her the two hundred soles and she finally left. It was a wrench to let her go, because it is a fact that I love her, aged and all as she is, it doesn't matter. . . ."

He could not get Gumercinda out of his mind and there came a moment when he said he was going to send for her, but on Sunday Casiana and the baby came with the other villagers. Fiero played with his son who was just beginning to walk, and praised him, saying he was going to be a fine, tall, brave man. The next day he asked his men to get him money because, "Old Rosendo, I've got something good on the fire."

Correa Zavala brought them the news that Oscar Amenabar had announced that he would run for Congress for the district. His father, Don Alvaro, was still in Lima and nobody knew when he would be back. Probably the only one who could say was a French mistress he had picked up. Ostensibly he was working for the best interests of the province, but his letters to his family and friends became fewer and farther between. His enemies said that the only thing he had done was to get them to send out the troops that had fought and captured Fiero Vasquez, and to carry on all kinds of intrigues to further his own schemes, and finally to get official support for his son's candidacy. Doña Leonor, who had been informed by friends of her husband's amorous dallying, was getting ready to go to Lima with one of her daughters. Beyond question, Don Alvaro should have returned long before because he had accomplished everything he wanted to do quickly. From time to time he wrote saying that he was keeping an eye on Jose Gonzalo's studies—he was in a boarding school—and preparing some handbills for the electoral campaign. Such weighty reasons so convinced Doña Leonor that plans for the trip were quickly completed.

When Correa Zavala had left, Fiero said to his cellmate:

"What do you think of that? There's luck for you. You villagers can thank this shameless Frenchwoman that you haven't been wiped out yet. But any day he or she will get fed up, and Don Alvaro will come back to look after his interests and carry out his life ambition—which is to ruin the Cordovas. With his son a congressman it will be worse . . . But Correa Zavala doesn't know something that I know: the Cordovas

have not been napping and there are four of them and they're no cowards. They're going to have Florencio Cordova run against him. You just wait, Rosendo. . . ."

That very night there was loud gunfire in the square. In the morning the door of the shop of Don Segundo Perez, one of Amenabar's electoral agents, looked like a sieve. A few days later Florencio Cordova announced his candidacy. That night the door of the house of the Montes, who were great friends of the Cordovas, was blown up by dynamite. The campaign was on in earnest.

Doña Leonor left for Lima, taking all her daughters with her.

Armed men barricaded themselves in the houses of the Amenabars and the Cordovas. At night they sent out squads to protect their friends, and, when they met, there were losses on both sides. The police had orders to help Amenabar, but as there were no street lights because the lamps had all been shot out, some of them were killed by the side they were supposed to be helping.

The capital of the province was on fire with the shots, the "long lives," the "down withs" and the forecasts. Fiero Vasquez, when he heard the shots, would grab hold of the window bars and shout at the top of his lungs, "Hooray for Florencio Cordova!" The noise of the struggle aroused and excited him. The prisoners wondered if Fiero Vasquez was going to try to escape. Amenabar and the authorities suspected the same thing. The night guard was doubled. Eight guards instead of four tormented the sleepers' rest with their cries.

During the day Fiero talked excitedly about his fights:

"Oh, old Rosendo, they sent the soldiers after me, but I fooled them for two months. Didn't they claim that I had stolen the brief? That gave me an idea. Five men, dressed in black, riding black horses, carrying rifles, and followed by other armed men, rode first here and then there. Fiero Vasquez was seen near Uyumi, he was seen near Huarca, he was seen near Suni, he was seen near Callari, he was seen . . . still farther off: he was seen headed south. Those were my men. The police and the hundred soldiers went this way and that and didn't know what to do. Until finally they killed one Fiero—poor Obduilio!—and they realized what had been going on. Then luck began to run their way and they struck the last place anybody would have thought of as a hideout. And there I was. At least Doroteo and six others managed to escape. They've teamed up together, and, as I told you, old fellow, I've got something good under way. And these elections are helping things

along.

"Everybody asks why those dogs didn't kill me, the same as they did my companions. The truth of the matter is that I was saying the prayer of the Righteous Judge which I think must be good, for Doroteo was saved too. But I can't help thinking that the death of poor Obdulio helped the prayer. The soldiers caught that Fiero and told about it and the news spread. When the police came to identify the body they saw that it was not the real Fiero. The dead man was better looking. But the news got around and people had a good laugh. Afterward, so people would not think it was a lie when they said they had captured me, they brought me in alive. You have to have luck in everything."

Fiero received money one Sunday and the blacksmith sent him a little package by Correa Zavala which the bandit quickly put away, saying they were some hoops for his little boy to play with. When they were talking in the sun, a half-breed came over to ask him for a cigarette and they began to walk along together and talk. When Fiero got back to his cell he hid a revolver away between the blankets.

"You see," he said to Rosendo, "the jailer is still friendly, but he's a little nervous and he goes over all my visitors very carefully."

Fiero was nibbling delicately at the chicken and broiled meat a friend of his, the mistress of a tavern who supplied his food, had sent in. While eating he took out from between his teeth a little roll of paper. His clear eye glittered as he read it by the dim light of the window, and his mouth opened into the whitest of smiles. His countenance was both ugly and handsome, and on his brow was an expression of determination.

"Now," he said to Rosendo, "now is the time. Let's go. Tonight, when it's dark, Doroteo and six others are coming to the house next door, the one beside the old wall of the courtyard where we take the sun. Of course they'll keep the people who live there quiet. In this package Correa Zavala brought there are skeleton keys. Don Jacinto made them. I can reach the lock through the window. I'll get out and grab the guard that patrols this block by the neck and kill him. Then we'll run to the hall and into the courtyard. Since they've doubled the guard there's a trooper in that courtyard. I'll shoot him if I can't surprise him. From the house next door they'll let down a rope so I can climb up. The two guards on the left side of the roof have been bribed and they'll fire into the air. Doroteo and his men will shoot to kill at the other two. Of course they may kill me first while I am climbing up the rope, but it's a dark night and my men will smash the light in the

courtyard as soon as they see me. Come on, Rosendo, I'll let you go up first."

"I am too old . . . I can't climb."

"They'll pull you up."

"We'd better see if the skeleton keys are going to work."

"Well, suppose they work. . . ."

"What if they haven't been able to take the house next door and you got there and find there's no rope?"

"They'll try to get in, and if they don't succeed they'll fire off their guns so I'll know."

"They might be shots fired by the political bands, and you won't go and they'll be waiting there all night."

"That would be a lot of bad luck . . . Let's go!"

They were both talking vehemently.

"But when they hear you shoot the guard, those who are at the door will come, and others will surround the prison outside—"

"That's where Doroteo's shooting comes in, to keep them in the hall, and we'll have to move fast before they can surround us, and, anyway, we can always shoot our way through. With the streets so dark, it will be easier—"

"I am very old. They'll catch you on my account, because I am too weak and slow. While I'm climbing they'll be shooting at you down below."

"Listen, I don't care. You have always seemed like a good old man to me and your people took me in. It's the second place I've found friendship in my life. I want to pay you back some way . . . and if I die at the foot of the wall, it doesn't matter."

"Let me think it over," said Rosendo.

The two prisoners, after eating lunch, lay down on their beds. Their silhouettes were barely visible in the darkness of the corners. Rosendo lay chewing his coca. Fiero lighted his cigarette and examined the skeleton keys and the chamber of his revolver. The old man was

thinking over what would happen to him if he managed to escape. The bandit was thinking only of the success of the escape itself. There, beyond the wall, lay his world of cliffs, sharpshooting, and caverns. What did the rest matter? Correa Zavala knew absolutely nothing about the plan, in spite of the fact that he had, unknowingly, brought in the skeleton keys. All through the trial Fiero had never said a word to him about escape. The only thing he had said was that he didn't have much hope and that he would like to stay there in the province as long as he could, to settle some family matters. Correa Zavala asked for a stay of trial and then another in order to delay Fiero's transfer to the capital of the department. Meanwhile, Vasquez laid plans for his escape.

"Look here, Rosendo," whispered Fiero once, breaking in on the old man's thoughts, "the whole thing is getting to the street. The lack of street lights makes everything easy. No matter how many troopers come after us, once we get around the corner they won't be able to see us. And the troopers can't come chasing after us into the hills because they're busy with the elections. And suppose Florencio Cordova wins? Better yet. I told the Lawyer to talk to him and he went to see him one night and Don Florencio told him they might need me if the going got bad. This election is going to be won by the side that can scare the most voters."

"I'm thinking it over," answered the mayor.

Out in the courtyard Fiero talked calmly, the same as every other day, and Rosendo, sitting on the bench that brought him memories of Jacinto Prieto, kept stubbornly silent. One of the prisoners tried to draw out Fiero, either because of his own or somebody else's curiosity, and asked:

"And what do you think about the elections, Don Vasquez? Who's going to win?"

Fiero answered:

"The elections always seem the same to me. Of course, my sympathies are with Don Florencio Cordova, but I think Oscar Amenabar will win. Because of his father. He's a tough one. I'll have to rot in prison even if they can't prove anything against me."

Rosendo Maqui had to make an effort not to smile. Some of the prisoners thought there was more shooting than on other occasions. The half-breed from Our Lady district said that if he was free he

would repeat his military exploit against Amenabar's supporters because he could not stand the sight of that dirty dog. Great arguments were started between the prisoners about which of the two candidates was worse. The list of abuses was long and rather confused. On the way back to the cells they came to the conclusion that Amenabar was worse because for eight years now the Cordovas had not despoiled anybody, while the memory of what had happened in Rumi was still fresh, and there, right with them, was good old Rosendo as an example.

When in the cell, Rosendo spoke:

"I am very grateful to you, friend. You don't entirely believe that Amenabar is going to win and I do. What would happen to me in that case? You have the highlands, the caves, the roads, the health and strength to go wherever you want. I am a worn-out old man who cannot fight. When Amenabar wins he will pursue me and capture me. And if he doesn't it will be worse. On the excuse of looking for me they will commit a thousand abuses against the community. I can accomplish nothing by escaping. If I get out of here and I doubt that I can, it would be to see the growing fields, to feel the joy of being close to them again. Running away and hiding would be as bad for me as jail, or worse. And so many villagers might die and suffer for me without any need for it."

It was the voice of the man who belonged to the land and to his people that was speaking, and Fiero Vasquez answered:

"All right."

There was nothing more they could say to one another. There was a gulf between them, as though they were already separated, as if the escape had already taken place. Fiero paced the cell from one wall to the other, and Rosendo, squatting on his bed, watched him. One was thinking about what he was going to do. The other about what he was not going to do. At times each thought the other was right but, at the same time, they felt far apart. And so the last hours of the day passed and suppertime came and night. Rosendo, as he sipped his soup, thought that from this night on he would be alone again, without being able to talk to Fiero, and he felt as though he were chewing this loneliness with his food and his coca. Finally he brought out:

"I'm sorry to see you go."

"I'm sorry to leave you too," answered Fiero.

At eight o'clock, when the relief came on, Fiero called to one of the guards:

"Guard, would you do me a favor?"

The guard came over and, as if without thinking, put his hand against the window.

"Could you get me a pack of cigarettes?"

"I'm sorry," said the guard, "I'm going off duty now."

Meanwhile Fiero slipped a little roll of paper between his fingers, and the guard walked on, saying there were prisoners who were a great bother and who should be put in their place.

"Rosendo, he and his mate are getting four hundred soles out of this. And the poor devils make only thirty soles a month."

Night came on slowly. Several shots were heard in the distance. Fiero knew that if anything went wrong they would sound close at hand. Rosendo listened as attentively as Fiero. In one of the blocks the sobbing melody of a yaravi went on for a long time. Then everything grew quiet. The guard in the first courtyard walked up and down along the gallery on which the cells faced. He was undoubtedly in the pay of Amenabar. The guards in the courtyard were always the same and this made Fiero suspicious, and he did not try to bribe them. A dog began yapping furiously somewhere in the neighborhood. Perhaps Doroteo and his men were already getting into the house, with the help of the servant girl in the tavern and a few soles they had managed to give her.

The light was dim in the halls, and when the guard was at the other end Fiero tried out the skeleton keys. Rosendo suffered as he heard the faint, useless clicking. Fiero could hardly get his thick hand through the bars. He could now talk freely with Rosendo and he told him that there were only four keys left to try. As he tried one of them the lock opened. It was the first victory. Both of the men flattened out against the wall as the guard passed.

At eleven, because of precautions made necessary by the darkness of the city, and in case one of them should get too sleepy, the guards began to call out their numbers. Eight shouts, one after another, shook the night, at intervals of ten or fifteen minutes between one series and the other. Rosendo was gripped by a painful anxiety and Fiero Vasquez felt as though he were being stalked by the alert, monotonous

sounds which died away after reverberating dully against the walls. It was now time to watch for his opportunity. He opened the holster of the revolver that was fastened to his belt and gripped a short dagger between his teeth. The guard went by. He began to call out the numbers.

Rosendo shuddered and Fiero held back his breath. The guard in the front courtyard called out his number, which was three. Fiero unhooked the padlock, laid it on the floor, and quietly pushed back the bolt. The guard was returning. It would be ten or fifteen minutes before he had to call out his number again. Now was the time. How quickly his chance had come! What if the guard were to notice that the padlock was gone and took steps? He went by, and, at the very moment he passed, Fiero quickly opened the door and sprang on his neck. The guard was not able to speak but he let out a groan. They rolled to the floor and Fiero drove his dagger into his heart. As he ran toward the hall that opened on to the inner courtyard, his shoes clattered too loudly in the silence of the night.

One of the guards shouted from the door:

"They're escaping."

Rosendo lay down on his bed. The revolver shot sounded in the courtyard where they took the sun and there was the noise of many guards running, while shots from carbines and rifles resounded through the building. The prisoners awoke and their shouts added to the confusion. But the exchange of shots was brief. The guards came back shouting:

"Into the street."

A few shots were heard far away, and in a little while the guards, carrying lanterns and cursing, inspected all the cells. That damned Fiero Vasquez! Afterward they looked over the courtyard. Two dead guards lay there and another on the roof. But at the foot of the wall there were traces of blood. Fiero Vasquez must have been wounded. The residents of the house that had been assaulted cried out that a bandit had just died and other troopers came bringing in the body. It was Blue-Eyes. Swearing they would get Fiero Vasquez, they all came into the front courtyard and several entered Rosendo's cell. He was standing by the door with a startled air.

"Why didn't you call out, you idiot of an Indian?"

"The shots just woke me up."

"You're making out to be dumb."

The fury of the police had found an outlet and four pitiless gunstocks descended, again and again, on the old man's body. From the other cells came shouts of, "Shame!" "Cowards!" The police went on beating him. Rosendo whimpered, gritting his teeth together, while the sharp, hard blows fell on him, as he lay where he had fallen. The floor was hard under his breast, the blows on his back harder. An intense pain, which ran like a cold bar of steel from his head to his feet, made him let out a long howl. He thought he was dying. He was slipping into the silent abyss of unconsciousness.

He never knew exactly when he came to. His consciousness was like a floating cloud. He heard someone say, as though speaking from a great distance, "Pour more water over him," and the water, like an icy whiplash, fell on his head and breast. He was then able to move, and the voices said, "He's come to now," and other things, and a door slammed and there was the echo of departing footsteps.

The floor was very wet there. Day was breaking. Was that a sparrow singing? It had been a long time since he had heard the song of a bird, and there was a tender sweetness in the little voice. Afterward he managed to drag himself to the bed and wrap his chilled body in the blankets. From the window came a thin fringe of light. A new dawn was coming, another day, which brought the possibility of happiness and work to men, at least of effort, of search outside in the world. Lake Yanañahui would glitter to one side of the plain, a beautiful eye, a magic eye of the earth, looking out on pastures, rocks, men, animals, sky. Lofty Rumi would be surrounded by swift, scudding clouds and its spirit could foretell the good and the bad, only once Rosendo's old ears had not heard it rightly. On the hillsides the furrows are long and deep and smell good, because they smell of the earth.

The cell does not smell of the earth. It smells of rotting mud, of sweat, of urine, of misery. The floor is turgid and lifeless. This smell troubles him more than the bruises on his body. Perhaps Rosendo's body, too, is profaned soil. It hurts him very much, causing him a suffering that constricts his breast. If he could only cry! But he cannot cry because his heart has dried up within him, like an old tree. Trees, too, have a heart and as long as this endures there is a possibility that they may send out new shoots and live. The heart of man! The heart of a tree! His beats painfully. Perhaps he is going to die. What of it? Only that

the villagers will suffer and will say in tears, "Poor Father Rosendo." If only he could have lived to see the return of his dear son Benito. But since he can't... Now he is glad he helped Benito that time: if before he used to have an occasional scruple about having helped him to get away, he had none left now. Benito is strong. Poor old woman, who died without seeing him again, either. He ought to go to join Pascuala. What was there left in life for him? Sorrow, ever greater sorrow, because it is mixed with humiliation.

The earth is far, far away. Now, on his purple poncho lives a field of quinua. Those rows of quinua, so porous, so broad, so dark, and the quinua itself, with its strong shoots, so hungry for room, a mass of strength and tenacity, growing in the cold, the storm, the wind, thanks to the upland fields, hard and open to the hope of the strong. He no longer is strong. He is a fallen tree on profaned soil. The broad earth of the highland, with its wild hay, mastered by the hand of man. There is the green shawl of the barley field; nearby, the colts whinny; a young calf prances around its proud mother; at the door of the house Juanacha is talking with her little son; out of the cabins comes the smoke, and on the slopes of El Alto grazes a herd of sheep, and in the heaven, another of clouds.

From the stone where he is sitting, the village is most beautiful. The cornstalks are bearded like a man, and the wheat holds up its stalks of sun. The bell of the chapel rings. Pascuala is weaving a beautiful colored blanket. The ox Mosco has come for salt and is licking the chunk of rock salt. Old Chauqui tells about the time when everything was community and says that the villagers of Rumi are descended from the condors. That is the flute of Demetrio Sumallacta, which sounds like the song of the doves. The doves flutter above the ravine that is emurpled with berries. From the ravine descends the canal of water glittering in the sun. In Anselmo's harp is the song of the birds at dawning. "Don't hit me!" "Don't hit me!" "Why are they beating me so?" "Don't hit me!"

At noon a guard called to Rosendo to come and take his food, but there was no answer. Rosendo was dead.

The usual entrances and exits of guards, jailer, judge, subprefect, and prison doctor followed. Correa Zavala was away on business in a village. The doctor looked at the corpse and without even examining it diagnosed that death was the result of a heart attack. The judge, with unruffled composure, signed the death certificate. And the subprefect said to the guards:

"Now that all the legal formalities have been observed, get him buried tonight. If we turn the corpse over to the Indians, they're going to make a great to-do, and I don't want any disorders . . . See that the news doesn't get around."

As soon as it was dark they tied the corpse by the feet and hands to a long pole which the guards carried on their shoulders. The lean body swung sadly back and forth as the lugubrious procession wound its way to the cemetery. The white hair hung down toward the ground. The distorted face hung from the neck, swallowing up the shadows in its wide, staring eyes.

16

The Head of Fiero Vasquez

The morning sun shed its cheerful golden light over the fields, and a flock grazed in the vicinity of Las Tunas, a district located about five miles from the capital of the province. A sheep got entangled in a patch of briars, and the little shepherdess, who went to free it, started back in horror, screaming:

"The head of a dead man! The head of a dead man!"

People came running out of the nearby houses. In the center of the patch, among the brambles and the waving blue cactus fronds, lay a human head. One of the men took out his machete, and, slashing away the brambles, managed to get near it.

"It looks like the head of Fiero Vasquez," he said.

"Fiero Vasquez!"

"Don't anybody touch it. We might get into trouble."

"Who could have killed him?"

"Where is the body?"

And, as on another occasion now long past, somebody else said:

"We'll have to notify the judge."

The judge and the subprefect of the province, accompanied by several troopers, arrived soon after to find a great crowd of people gathered about the bramble patch. A trooper took the head, which filled the air with its stench, and laid it on the ground at the feet of the authorities. They looked it over with curiosity and satisfaction. The judge said:

"Yes, it is the head of Fiero Vasquez."

The countrypeople looked at it fearfully.

Sinister, swollen, the skin was purple and so distended that it filled in the cavities of the smallpox pits and the gunshot wound. The eyes were partly closed because of the swelling of the eyelids, but through

the oozing slits the brown pupil and the filmed-over pupil looked out with grim fixity. The nose had spread into shapelessness and the once broad smile was only a grimace of pain or contempt. Between the swollen purple lips a gleam of the white teeth could be caught, the tangled hair fell over the forehead and temples, and the clotted blood was black on the neck. It was a sight to inspire horror and fear. Some wag cried out:

"Watch out! He's getting up!"

The crowd drew back a step and looked at one another, but nobody smiled. The subprefect growled:

"This is no time for jokes. Let's see if we can find the body."

They cut down the bramble patch and others close by, and searched brooks, rivers, and any place where a body might have been concealed, without finding it. If it had been lying on the ground, there would have been a flock of buzzards hovering around it having a feast. In one place, at the foot of a big stone, there was a partially dug grave. That was what the sensation mongers said. Others said it might be a new hole someone had dug to burn charcoal, and the one who had dug it kept quiet so as not to get into trouble. But was he killed in Las Tunas? Maybe they killed him off somewhere and brought the head there so that nobody would know where he died. Or maybe it was revenge and the one who had him killed told them to bring the head back to make sure he had been killed before he paid what had been agreed on. The conjectures increased as the places where the body might be hidden decreased. The judge, meanwhile, questioned the little shepherdess and the first people who had arrived at the bramble patch. The girl, who was afraid she was going to get into trouble, wept. The subprefect returned from his fruitless search, saying:

"We'll have to take in the head for a medical-legal examination."

"That's the law," agreed the judge.

The party set off. A trooper carried the head of Fiero Vasquez high in the air on the point of his saber. He brought up the rear so that the stench would not bother the other riders.

In the capital of the province the coroner learnedly stated that the head had been separated from the body by a knife used by someone who knew how to handle it. The head was put up at the door of the subprefecture, and the people of the town, as soon as they heard the

news, came to see it. Among these was a woman who had a tavern, who wept sadly saying this was, beyond question, the head of her friend, Fiero Vasquez. The procession of the curious lasted until six that afternoon when the head was taken to the graveyard and buried.

The news reached Yananahu and Casiana wept, clasping in her arms her little son, who was now three years old. She did not want to make any conjectures and could not. She loved the man, not the legend.

The news reached the remnants of his band and they cursed bitterly and furiously. Doroteo cried, muttering:

"And now I realize how fond I was of the damned—"

If they ever found out who did it . . . But there was no clue of any sort. Fiero had gone away by himself, saying he would be back in a week, but he had not said where he was going.

The news traveled through the whole region, and there was a welter of speculations, comments, and even different versions. Naturally the suppositions of the countrypeople around Las Tunas the day the head was found were repeated and embroidered upon. There were some who deduced that it was Don Alvaro Amenabar who had ordered him killed. But Don Alvaro had not thrown the head into the brambles. If Don Alvaro, or whoever it was, had wanted Vasquez's death made known they would have left it out on the road. It almost went unobserved in the briar patch. Whoever threw it there did so to hide it.

Others said the police had killed Fiero. There was even a version in circulation according to which a mule driver coming back late at night had heard someone say: "Don't kill me tied up like this, you cowardly policemen." But that did not hold water. If the police had taken Fiero prisoner, they would have cried it to the four winds and justified their killing of him on the grounds that he had tried to escape or that there had been a fight. The subprefect would have said that it was he who had directed or at least planned the capture. Finally, it was said that a woman did it out of jealousy. But she would have no reason to divide him up like that. Anyway, whoever hides a body hides it head and all, and whoever wants to display a head puts it where it can be seen and doesn't toss it into a lonely brier patch. But maybe the shepherdess had been told it was there so that she could pretend to find it. No, for the poor thing was a simple child who had been questioned over and over again by the authorities, and who surely, terrified as she was, would have revealed any complicity if it had existed.

The legend grew, and along the roads, about midnight or at the first peep of dawn a headless horseman was seen galloping by.

This discovery marked an epoch, and the countrypeople of the vicinity began to say:

"A little while before Fiero Vasquez's head was found. . . ."

17

The Return of Benito Castro

Ever since he left he had been coming back and at last he had returned. He did not even stop in the town to exchange a few words with the people he knew there. There would be time for that. What he wanted now was to get to Rumi as fast as he could, to embrace his family, his village, his community: to be a part of the life of the earth once more.

The landscape warmed his heart and seemed to open its arms to him. Those bare hills of the highlands, those abrupt descents, those hairpin curves, and at last, at last, the peak of Rumi. There was the father of rock, as majestic and noble as the other, Mayor Rosendo. Beyond a doubt he would find Rosendo bravely bearing the weight of his years, sitting on the porch, his lique staff in his hand. "Father, father." The old man would try to get up. "Don't get up, father." Benito would kneel down to embrace him. It would do him good to feel against his own harassed breast that of this upright, calm man. Old Pascuala would cry. "Don't cry, mother. See, I've come back. I've thought about you all these years." She would say, because it was what she always repeated, "When my day comes, the only thing I want is for you to close my eyes." Chabela would come, too, and all the Maquis, and, little by little, the other members of the community.

Of course, some would be missing, because life isn't a thing you can buy, but there would be new faces smiling there too. So many years! He didn't even want to think about Cruz Mercedes, who, of course, would be married by this time. After the excitement of the first moments, Juanacha or another of his sisters would want to prepare something special for him. "No, I don't want any dainties. Just give me my potatoes cooked with red pepper, my corn stew, and my dried beef." He longed for the food he was used to, and it was always a treat the few times he had been able to taste it while he was away. Besides, it tasted of the earth. Then they would spread his bed and, meanwhile, Augusto Maqui, who was probably a good rider by now, would say, "What a fine horse you've got." And Voluntario was a handsome, strong pony. Augusto himself would unsaddle him and turn him out to pasture. Then Benito would stretch out to sleep, covering himself with the thick, well-carded blankets, with stripes and happiness woven into them, and next morning he would begin to live—in the company of

men and the earth—the life for which he had been longing so many years.

Voluntario trotted ahead to meet the night. The shadows were thickening in the ravines and on the distant hills the blues and purples were darkening into a block of shadow. The peak of Rumi was lost in the blackness and now horse and rider could see only the road before them. They were now on the bare uplands and the wind whistled steadily through the high grass like the voice of space itself. Benito recalled the night he had left, when this same whistle had seemed to him the moaning of his suffering heart. Now he heard it with joy, recognizing in it the nocturnal voice of his native region.

It was with profound emotion that he recalled the circumstances under which he had left the community and why he had not been able to return before.

His stepfather got drunk during Saint Isidore's feast and began shouting:

"We should not allow any half-breeds in this community. There is one I'm going to throw out."

And he made a lunge to grab Benito by the neck. Benito gave him a push which knocked him down. The stepfather drew a knife and Benito whipped out his. He was amazed to see how well he could use the sharp blade. In a moment he had buried it in his stepfather's breast. As there was no jail, and the church where the occasional prisoners were put was full of worshipers, Benito was shut up in a room in Rosendo Maqui's house. The community was supposed to judge him, but, nevertheless, the State would also claim its sacred right to administer justice to its "governed." About four o'clock that morning Rosendo led him to the outskirts of the town. The horse he afterwards called Lucero was waiting there, saddled.

Rosendo said to him:

"Only you, I, and poor Pascuala who is back there crying, know about this. I'm letting you go, son, for I can't see why the State should punish the Indians when it doesn't bother to teach them right from wrong. It's

the community I'm worried about. It has a right to judge you and it might absolve you, for the quarrel was not of your making. But if you stay here any longer they'll come from town and arrest you. Zenobio Garcia probably knows about it already. I'd like to do right by the community, but this is more than I can bear, and I am going to set you free. Go, my son. It doesn't matter losing a horse. If you have any affection for me I want you to promise me one thing: mind your own business and don't get into trouble. You promise?"

"Yes, taita."

"Then go, and come back when your crime is forgotten."

He gave him a knapsack of clothing and food that Pascuala had prepared for him, they embraced one another, and Benito left. As he turned his head to look back from time to time he could see Rosendo still standing there in the middle of the road, watching him ride off....

The wind beat against the shadows, tugging at Benito's poncho. Voluntario trotted ahead at a brisk pace, though he stumbled at times on the unfamiliar road. The horse, probably sensing the satisfaction of his rider, kept on without any sign of weariness, although they had set out at dawn. But suddenly Benito pulled him up short. They were beginning to descend, and he did not see the usual lights of the village down in the hollow. Was it that late already? It had not been long since it got dark and they had ridden fast. Perhaps ... Benito let out the reins with a feeling of uneasiness. The horse picked its way down the steep path slowly and cautiously.

So many things had happened to Benito since he left ... When he reached Trujillo he had been drafted for military service. He could have got out of it, on the grounds that he was past the age, but he was tired of looking for work and he remained. As a soldier he learned what kicks and arrests were, but when he rose to corporal he could hand them out himself, and when he became a sergeant he got even with those who had made him suffer. Severe corporal punishment was an old rule, applied especially to the new recruits. It is told of Marshal Castillo that whenever he heard an Indian soldier humming to himself he said: "An Indian who sings the songs of his region is sure to be a deserter. Give him forty lashes." This was just one of the many "motives" they found for inflicting corporal punishment. Benito rose to top sergeant, and when his term of service was finished he re-enlisted,

with more pay and privileges.

The day came when his regiment was sent into action against Eleodoro Benel. The guerilla leader had been fighting in the hills of the Department of Cajamarca since 1922. At first he had held several provinces, but finally he was driven out of all except Chota. That was enough. At night, in the distance, ten, twenty lights would spring up. A group of Benelists was making camp. The rural guards—who had proudly made their appearance to replace the police—or the militia sent out surprise parties. They were the ones who were surprised. When they least expected it a hail of bullets descended on them. Neither side gave any quarter and a captured man was a dead man. Large-scale operations? Benel slipped through their hands to fall upon their rear guard, with the help of the countrypeople who were sometimes his soldiers and always his spies. The regiments returned to the city of Cajamarca, their base of operations, badly cut up. Which did not, however, prevent the recruits and the enlisted men from selling the Mauser bullets they took out of the dead men's cartridge belts or those they claimed they had shot off, at twenty cents apiece, to Doctor Murga, one of Benel's agents. Without question many of them, in subsequent engagements, died with one of these bullets through his head. But the survivors went on selling munitions with a certain disdain for their own lives and a kind of cruel irony, and they kept up an unusual resistance as they marched along the out-of-the-way routes on which they were sent. Besides, Leguia's astute policy was to attach no importance to the movement, and present Benel and his men as bandits. But, in spite of censorship of the press and control of all sources of news, the country began to have its doubts. So stern action was called for.

It was the middle of 1925 when Benito Castro's regiment was called up for action. The troops sowed terror as they advanced. At Llaucan a group of some hundred countrypeople who were threshing their wheat was massacred and completely wiped out with shot, bayonets, and gunstocks. Benito's company fell into an ambush and its ranks grew thinner. The defeated column fell back and halted in front of an Indian's cabin. Several soldiers went in.

"Listen, Indian, you're on Benel's side."

"No, fathers, I don't have anything to do with such things."

One of the hollow reeds that formed a partition of the house broke as a soldier leaned against it, and twenty bullets rolled out on the floor. They looked in the others and they were all full of Mauser bullets.

"You, you Indian devil! Will you hand over your rifle, yes or no?"

The muzzles of the guns were pressing against his ribs.

"I haven't any," screamed the Indian, knowing he was lost.

They took him out in the little yard. His wife knelt before the squad, clasping her hands as in prayer. "Don't kill him!" and her two little children clung to her sobbing for protection. The squad fired at the four of them and the woman looked with reproachful eyes at Benito, who was standing to one side. "Help me, Benito Castro!" she screamed before she died.

Benito looked at the man and woman. Their faces did not seem altogether unfamiliar. The soldiers, on the other hand, eyed him suspiciously. Could he be a supporter of Benel? On enlistment he had said his name was Emilio. "Benito is my brother and we look alike," the sergeant explained. So he had a brother who was a Benelist!

From that day on he felt that he was being watched. "Help me, Benito Castro!" Should he revolt? When he was in Callao he had seen a number of classes which had revolted or tried to revolt on their way to the prison island of El Fronton. His term of enlistment expired and he received his discharge. He had saved three hundred soles and he had acquired a rifle and five hundred rounds of ammunition. For a moment he thought of joining Benel, but he learned that he was a rancher and that discouraged him. What was Benel really after? Would he do anything for the people if he got into power? For as long as he could remember he had heard people talk about the Presidents, Leguia, Billinghurst, Benavides, Pardo, and then Leguia again. He had never seen any change in the life of the people. When these men talked in public they insulted one another and talked a lot about the nation. But what was the nation if not the people?

So he bought a good horse and started back to his village. And now there were no lights, everything was dark. Perhaps Romulo Quinto whose name he had read in the paper . . . Perhaps those people who were shot . . . Could the community have disappeared? "Help me, Benito Castro!" So they knew him. Perhaps it was somebody who had visited Rumi at festival time.

Probably he had taken longer on the road than he had thought and the fires of the village of Rumi had died out. Because in Cajamarca he had asked several countrypeople if they knew about the community and nobody had been able to tell him anything. It was foolish to

borrow trouble. Just before reaching Lombriz Creek there is a big cactus with thick arms. He remembered it very well. Its trunk was gray with age and on its green fronds burned the red flame of its flowers. It still stood there among the rocks, defying time. At night it looked as though it were carved out of coal. Benito felt as though he had met an old friend.

He had finally reached the village, lying there in the darkness, like a pile of rocks. There were no cows in the pasture and no dog barked. Benito felt a strange foreboding. The first houses looked abandoned. He galloped to the house of Rosendo. A silence as hard as rock hung in the air, and he dismounted, breathing fast. There was no fire on the hearth and the rooms had no doors, their place being taken by lurking shadows. The sound of his footsteps was the only thing he heard as he walked in. Nobody was sleeping where Rosendo used to sleep. An ominous, mute silence enveloped all his doubts and fears. He went into the other room. A pig lying in the corner took fright and squealed and the little yellow lights of his eyes opening flashed. The house of Rosendo had been turned into a pigsty. Benito wanted to scream, to curse, to insult man and Fate, and yet he said nothing. His throat was tight; the words would not come, and his temples throbbed like two sun-smitten peaks. He went out without knowing which way to turn. His horse, perhaps feeling the loneliness, gave a long whinny that shook the night. Benito walked down the main street from one end to another, leading his horse behind him. All the houses were empty, vacant, the gaping doors shouting of their desertion. The tiled roofs stood skeleton-like, and those of thatch, disheveled and awry. Benito went back to the square and gave the long, powerful cry which countrypeople give when they want to attract attention and need help:

"Upa-a-a-a-a-a."

The moments went by and there was no answer, except from the hills. The echoes sounded like howls. He knew that the first to answer would be Peana because it was the nearest and because of its many peaks. He called out once more and his only answer was the doleful chorus of the hills. Far-off hills were among those that were answering him, for his voice rang out more violent and powerful than ever before. He walked toward the chapel and the sound of his steps and the clinking of his spurs were lost in the silence as in a vast lonely desert. The tall eucalyptus trees were still there, and the wind rustled harshly through their leaves. The chapel, too, was unroofed and between the beams an occasional star could be seen.

Without knowing what to do or where to go, Benito sat down on the

porch, leaning back against the wall. Near him stood his horse, breathing warm and rhythmically and pawing nervously. What could have happened? Perhaps it was the plague, but it was very strange that it had left nobody. Why had they all gone away? Had some rich landowner stripped them of their land? Where could they have gone? What about Rosendo? And Pascuala? All the sufferings Benito had undergone in his whole life now came together in one: the disappearance of the community. He was overwhelmed and he did not know what to think. A feeling of utter forlornness came over him and he sat there motionless.

Suddenly he felt that his face was wet. He was crying, quietly and silently, like those old rocks of the mountains that exude dampness. Perhaps he was the last stone of a mountain that had been demolished by a storm. He felt lifeless, numb, and this weeping was the only difference between him and the dead. How long? He did not feel the passing of time. His grief had submerged him in a boundless desolation. Only when the birds began to sing did he realize that he was still alive and that a new morning had come. He got up, wiping away his tears with his poncho. Then he examined the loading of his gun and took several boxes of cartridges out of his saddlebag and put them in his pocket. He had the sudden gripping certainty that all this had come from the hand of man and that it would be well to be prepared. Romulo, the people who had been shot . . . He would not let hope beguile his doubts any more.

A flood of light was pouring down from the heights of Rumi and the birds were singing again. A red-breasted huanachoa fluttered gaily over the traveler's head. Four hogs came slowly out, one after the other, grunting, and crossed the square, stopping in front of a house near the main street. Benito mounted and rode toward it. It had a door that was still closed. In a little while a woman came out, and when she saw him carrying a rifle she gave a scream and dashed back into the house, slamming the door.

"Come out," called Benito.

A man came to the door with a shotgun in his hand.

"What's the matter? Who are you?"

"Benito Castro. Who are you?"

"Ramon Briceño."

"What's been going on here?"

"That's quite a question. You can see for yourself, it looks as though there weren't any villagers here. . . ."

The men looked at each other with their eyes and the barrels of their guns.

"Tell me what happened and be quick about it."

"Don Alvaro Amenabar won a suit against them and they are in Yananahui."

Benito set spurs to his horse. As he climbed the narrow path he turned his head to look at the village again with loving and hopeless insistence. The fallen, broken roofs revealed the inside of the houses, where grass and even bushes were growing. The walls were worn down and cracked by the rain and everything had a dying look. Rosendo's house was one of the few that still had a roof, which was probably kept in repair because it was used as a pigsty. The old eucalyptus trees waved their branches trying to hide the skeleton of the chapel, and around the village, where the planted fields had formerly been, weeds and a yellowish grass now flourished. The square, once gay with children, was a wallowing place for the pigs. Voluntario leaned down and pulled up a mouthful of grass, and the man suddenly felt sorry for his horse which he had forgotten to feed all that night. But they could not stop now. They had to go on. In one last glance Benito saw Briceño's wife pulling some rafters from a roof for kindling.

There, at last, was the plateau of Yananahui with its old ruins and its lake and, on the slope nearest Rumi, the new, gray village of stone and the brownish fields which had been harvested. The milch cows lowed in the barn lot and there was stock grazing in the pasture.

At the entrance to the village he met a boy.

"What's your name?"

"Indalecio."

"Which is the mayor's house?"

"Over there, by that big blue stone."

'Benito trotted past the row of houses when a cry of pleasure and surprise halted him:

"Benito!"

It was Juanacha. She ran happily to embrace him, shouting with her arms on high:

"My little brother, my little brother."

When he got down he was surrounded by villagers who had come out of the neighboring houses. He took Juanacha in his arms, shook hands with some, patted others on the back, or pinched their cheeks if they were children. He stopped suddenly to ask Juanacha:

"And Father Rosendo? And mama?"

Juanacha made a sorrowful gesture which Benito understood all too well. His face clouded over, and the rejoicing with which his return had been greeted disappeared instantly. Other villagers came up, among them Pancho and Nicasio Maqui, and Benito greeted them soberly.

"Who is the mayor?" he finally asked.

"Clemente Yacu, but he is sick. That's his house over there."

Juanacha begged him:

"Are you going to stay here with me? Shall I get your bed ready?"

"All right, but first I want to talk with Clemente."

Juanacha's oldest son took charge of the horse, and Benito, breaking through the circle that surrounded him, walked off accompanied, or better followed, by Pancho, Nicasio, and several others. They eyed him with a certain admiration. He was very changed. There was maturity and self-assurance in his face and an easy strength in his body. He wore a broad-brimmed felt hat and a light-brown poncho—like those of the ranchers—thrown back over his shoulders, revealing a dark vest and the gray riding breeches used by the army. On his heavy boots he wore silver spurs. With his gun in his hand—he had forgotten to leave it at Juanacha's house—he looked like a gentleman who had come to the highlands on a hunting trip. And then his manners! That way of greeting people by shaking hands with them, or patting them on the back, or pinching their cheek... In a word, Benito had come back a different man. More acquaintances came up to greet him, and he left them all at the door while he went into Clemente Yacu's house by himself. The mayor was lying on a bed covered with

blankets. He knew about his arrival. They shook hands.

"Here I am, Benito, crippled with this damned rheumatism till I can't walk."

"Tell me what happened."

"What?"

"What happened to the community? I don't know anything about it."

He leaned his gun against the wall, laid his hat on a stool, and sat down by the bed. The mayor began to speak, telling of the loss of the community, and from the remarks that Benito made in the course of the conversation Yacu could see that there were clear, precise ideas in that cropped head. Clemente's wife served them a gourd of potatoes cooked with red pepper, and a little later Juanacha came bringing another of broiled meat. Benito found in the food not only the taste of the earth but a sisterly affection to which he had become unaccustomed, and which touched him. Their talk was a long one. Clemente Yacu explained everything at length to the newcomer, as befitted a son of the old Mayor Rosendo Maqui.

The lawsuit was still going on. It was said that Don Alvaro Amenabar needed workers to plant coca on the banks of the Ocos River. The ranch on which he had discovered the mine was sold to him by its owners, as soon as his son was elected congressman, and that gave him plenty of hands to work it. Afterward, basing his action on the loss of the brief, he demanded proof of the rights of the community, to which Correa Zavala had replied, demanding proof of the rights of Umay. The suit had lasted for several years. The judge had decided against the community but the case had been carried to a higher court. The postman, at Correa Zavala's request, was accompanied by twenty troopers whom the subprefect had to provide, and by an equal number of villagers who went of their own accord. Among these, their guns concealed under their ponchos, were Doroteo Quispe, Eloy Condorumi, and several other former members of Fiero Vasquez's band who, after the death of their leader, had settled in the community.

Evaristo Maqui, the blacksmith, had died from drinking raw alcohol. He did little work, and what he did was not much account, and one day he set his own house on fire with the sparks from his forge. At one of the festivals he drank so much raw alcohol that it killed him.

Abram Maqui, Cruz Mercedes, and many other villagers had died in

the epidemic of grippe that struck the highlands in the year 1921. At first it was very severe and claimed many victims, especially among the workers on the ranches who were weakened by malaria. The Indians said the grippe was a woman dressed in white who went galloping along the highlands at night, on a white horse, spreading the sickness.

A little while back, just a week ago, Goyo Auca had died, but not of grippe. He was rolling down stones to build a fence and, to show how strong he was, he tried to roll a great big one down by himself. He ruptured himself and lived only two days.

The healer now was the villager Felipa. Nasha Suro had turned up in the district of Uyumi, where she was bearing out the tradition of the longevity of witches. Of late her prestige had been renewed by an airplane accident. One of the airplanes sent out to fight Benel lost its bearings in the fog and had to make a forced landing in a field near Uyumi. The Indians were terrified of these men from the city who could even fly and Nasha made gloomy predictions. The next day, just as the machine was taking off, a black cow came running past and one of the landing wheels struck her. The airplane was overturned, breaking a wing and the propeller. One of the pilots had his nose broken and the other fractured his shoulder. The cow, which had received a cruel blow on the flank, kept on running, frightened half to death, until it disappeared beyond a hill. The pilots had to return on horseback, and the airplane, which could not be flown because of the damage to its propeller, was left in charge of the governor of the district. Shortly after the accident Nasha Suro appeared with her arm bandaged, whereupon people said she had artfully turned herself into a black cow to bring down the plane.

But Nasha was not without enemies for Don Gervasio Mestas censured her from the pulpit. The priest had opened a store which also sold medicines and he said it was a great sin to believe in the curative qualities of potions prepared with evil arts. Nasha, remembering, no doubt, her failure with Amenabar, carefully refrained from foretelling the end of the priest. She maintained an attitude of reserve and scorn where he was concerned, and, for the moment, she turned the airplane accident to her advantage.

Returning to the matter of the trial, there were grounds for hope. The people of Muncha had testified in favor of the community, among them Zenobio Garcia who very tactfully reminded the villagers that for a long time they had not bought any brandy from him. He was no longer governor and his successor had put him in jail for two months,

but had released him on orders from Amenabar, who had said that the decision of the case was a foregone conclusion.

Zenobio kept a little of his former prestige, but Bismarck Ruiz's star was in complete eclipse. He had been cast off by the Cordovas who suspected that he had had an understanding with Don Alvaro. He believed that the latter would take him on, but nothing of the sort happened. Correa Zavala, who had been repudiated by all those who had money, barely eked out a living, and people said he defended the Indians out of revenge. He was a victim of small-town gossip. He told the villagers anything that might be useful to them. Don Alvaro had not been able to get support for his candidacy as senator because a relative of the president wanted the seat, but Oscar was still in Congress.

"So, Benito," said the mayor, winding up his long account of village news, "this is what has happened. The worst of all was the death of our beloved Rosendo. But carrying out what he had always preached we have cultivated our land and here we are."

Benito went back to his house. The noonday sun gleamed on the conical heights of Rumi and the last words of Clemente had sounded like a message. The spirit of Rosendo was still abroad on the earth, and had, no doubt, ascended to the peak of Rumi. Because of his love for Rosendo, he loved the earth and the unconquerable children of the earth more than ever. As he got into the gaily striped bed he wondered that his grief at Rosendo's death was not greater. Then he understood in his heart that nobody had lost him, that what was best in Rosendo lived on in the community; and this was that sense of life adjusted to the creative, fraternal rhythm of the earth. Then he sank into a sleep of calm repose.

18

The First Days

Benito awoke the next morning feeling as though he had lived a long time in the last two days. He, too, in his own way and in the space of several hours, had suffered the exodus, had lived through the years of struggle, had shared the uncertainty and sorrows, and finally had found his strength in the creative forces of the earth. Sitting on the threshold of the porch waiting for Benito, while the sun spread over the fields and the shadows retreated to the hills, were the Maquis, the menfolk and the women, and Chabela, Eulalia, Marguicha, Porfirio Medrano, Doroteo Quispe, and several others. Juanacha happily served him his breakfast, and then Benito went outside, without his poncho, a red silk handkerchief knotted around his neck and his broad-brimmed felt hat tilted to one side. He looked very dashing and there was a ripple of expectation in the row of houses. He greeted all with warm cordiality and then had a special word for each one.

"Porfirio Medrano—our beloved old Rosendo thought a lot of you. Once when he was in a jolly mood he said to me: 'I wouldn't trade that Porfirio for ten teams of oxen.'"

Porfirio answered without bitterness:

"Rosendo was a man, but things went badly and people even became suspicious of me. My son Juan went out in the world to earn his living and he hasn't come back. I am too old to suffer and to be ill-treated by the community I have loved so well."

Benito, who was standing beside Chabela, put his arm around her shoulders and replied:

"We have all suffered a lot. I don't want to come here trying to give orders, but I think we can do something to relieve our suffering. Doroteo, how are you? They tell me you've behaved like a brave man."

"With the help of some friends we managed to do a little."

Doroteo pointed to the two bandits who had settled in the community. Meanwhile Chabela had begun to cry and was wiping away the tears with her shawl.

"That's what they told me," said Benito, with an approving smile. "And is this the famous Valencio?"

Valencio stared in surprise at this man dressed like an overseer but who nevertheless seemed to be good. Benito looked him over from head to foot, pleased with his expression, half-trusting, half-ferocious. Then Eulalia began to talk, too much, of course, lamenting the death of Abram and the absence of Augusto, which seemed permanent. The worst of it was that Marguicha had been left husbandless. "It is all such a pity." Marguicha said nothing as she looked at Benito with her large sorrowful eyes. He shook his head sadly:

"I feel very badly about it. I loved them both; one as a brother, the other as a nephew. Abram, who was older than I, taught me how to break horses. When I left, Augusto already had the makings of a horseman. I brought Voluntario to improve our stock, and to please those of us who like good horseflesh. It is a great sorrow to me not to find them here."

They asked Benito to tell them something about what he had done all these years, and he answered:

"Some other time . . . it's a long story. Past those hills, following the mountains to the south, I went as far as Junin. From there I went to Lima, from Lima to Callao, and from there to Trujillo where I joined the army. With my regiment I went to Cajamarca. I was a top sergeant —and now I'm here. Don't think I haven't known suffering. It's a long story."

They talked for a time about matters relating to the community, and some of the visitors left and others came. When there were only a few left he asked them if they wanted to go with him to the cow pasture and they went along. Inocencio was still the cowherd; he had undoubtedly been born for this. He was very glad to see Benito, and he told him how he had missed him when they were driven out. But what made him still happier was when Benito picked up a lasso, and showed him that he had not forgotten how to use it. And his happiness knew no bounds when Benito asked him the name of each of the cows.

Benito Castro then went into the fields accompanied by Juanacha's oldest son who was named for his grandfather, Rosendo. The horses were in the meadows and Voluntario was beginning to make friends. Further off was the flock of sheep and the children who were guarding them. Benito gave one of them a tin whistle which he had had for a

long time, and the child blew it, blushing with embarrassment and pleasure. With young Rosendo he went as far as the old ruins and then crossed the grasslands to the lake. The sun was now very high. Benito pulled a big watch out of his front pocket and said it was time to go home for lunch. From their houses the villagers watched him and the boy felt very proud to be walking alongside such an important man.

While he was eating, sitting around the fire with Sebastian Poma, young Rosendo, the younger children, and Juanacha who served them their food in large gourds, Cashe and her mother came in. She brought a letter with her. The mother told them that the girl had gone to town, periodically, to see if there was any mail. She was waiting for a letter from her husband Adrian Santos. At last she had received one. Without even venturing to open it herself she had brought it to the village. Her father cut open the envelope very carefully with the point of his machete and drew out a postal card wrapped in paper. He said that it was evident that the picture on it was just to look at, and the paper was not a letter but a piece of newspaper, which had been used to wrap up the card so it would not get spoiled, for letters were written in handwriting. The other villagers were of the same opinion. Nobody had gone with her to advise her to put such an important matter in the hands of Correa Zavala, and, as the priest only came to Yananahui at the time of the saint's festival, they would like to request Benito to help them out. The girl's mother finished her careful, detailed statement, and, finally, handed him the envelope:

"We've put everything back just the way it was."

Benito took out the contents of the letter, looked at the front and back of the card, and then unfolded the paper.

"This letter has been written on a typewriter, because there are little machines to write with. . . ."

Cashe smiled sweetly. Benito, in a slow, agreeable voice, read:

"Trujillo, August 27, 1925. Dear Casimira Luma: This letter is being written for me by Don Julio who is working on the canalization. So that you will know what canalization is, I will tell that it is ditches into which you put pipes and these pipes carry away the dirty water from the town. This town is big and I have never seen such a big town. I am digging ditches with a lot of other fellows, and I make one

sol, eighty centavos a day. The work is hard but you get paid for it. Don Julio wants to write the way he talks, like a gentleman, but I tell him to put it down as I say it, so you can understand it. There's a woman here by the name of Nicola who feeds us pretty cheap. She gives us beans, which they eat a lot here, rice and a piece of meat. I have saved forty soles and I would have more if my friend Pablo hadn't said to me: Let's go to the movies. We went and I paid thirty centavos and so did he and we went upstairs. On a piece of white cloth figures began to appear and this is called a film. The figures moved around all the time, and sometimes they hit each other, and sometimes they galloped on horseback, shooting guns. What riders! But none of them could ride bareback and half-naked like Valencio. I sort of liked that film but I said to myself: What about Cashe? I have to come home with my money before it's all gone or we won't have anything to eat. So I'm not going to see any more films even though Pablo tells me there are other different ones. Work will be over here in a couple of weeks and then I'm going to cut cane to make a little more money and then I'm coming home. The other day I saw a little looking glass in a frame that looked like silver and I bought it for a sol and I said to myself: I'll keep it and take it home as a present.

"I left my leather lasso with a ring hanging on a peg in the corner. It would be a good thing if your father or whoever wants to would unroll it and grease it, because if it isn't greased it will get stiff and won't be any good. I want to keep it, for old Rosendo gave me that lasso when he let me go along to the roundup at Norpa that first time. I left my drum, too, and I'm thinking: what's it doing there quiet? Better give it to someone who knows how to play it and when you hear it you'll think of me.

"And now I can't think of anything more to tell you, except that during the day when I'm working I don't have time to remember, but as soon as I quit work, then I remember. Then I think about when I unsaddled my horse and the saddlepads smelled of sweat and the sheep trotted by on their way to the fold bleating and bleating, and Lake Yananahui was the color of the afternoon. At night I am very lonesome and I miss you so much, but I keep telling myself: I'll be going back; a man has to have patience. And then I make up my mind to work hard. So you know I'm going to a sugar plantation. I'll begin cutting cane, but they tell me I can get to be a hauler or help in the mill and I'll make two soles a day. Don't cry, Cashita, I'll be back. Regards to everybody. Your husband who loves you and misses you, Adrian Santos."

Benito said:

"It's been over a year since he wrote this letter. Maybe he took a long time to mail it, or they've held it at the post office."

"He said he'd be back," said Cashe hopefully, although, in spite of what he had told her, she had cried a little.

"Yes," answered Benito, not wanting to distress her, "and as soon as you hear from him again, tell him to come. He doesn't give any address here to answer him. Nobody is going to take our community away from us, and anyway we have to do everything we can."

The two women thanked him profusely, and as they left, the mother remarked what a comfort it was to have somebody in the community who knew how to read.

Benito Castro had told the mayor he would like to go to town to talk with Correa Zavala. He was free to do it, but he wanted Yacu to know about it so he would not think him a busybody. Yacu approved the idea.

"Well, I have been lucky," said Benito to himself as he came out of the lawyer's office. It was no longer necessary to go down through the hollow, for the road led up the slopes of El Alto to the tablelands. He arrived just as it was getting dusk. Voluntario's gay gallop attracted people's attention and the villagers saw the white horse approaching like a floating cloud.

"The community has won! The community has won!" shouted the rider as he rode between the rows of houses.

He pulled up short before Clemente Yacu's and went in to tell him what had happened. Voluntario stood blowing out his warm breath. The villagers gathered before the door and Clemente said:

"Go out and tell them what has happened."

Benito Castro went out and was received with a great display of enthusiasm. He took off his hat, and then explained in a loud voice:

"I have some good news for you. The higher court has upheld the right of the community to the lands it occupies. Correa Zavala thinks Amenabar will carry the matter to the Supreme Court but that we'll win there too. That's all. Now we can cultivate our land in peace, as

our greatest blessing."

Everybody received the news with manifestations of great delight and there were even cheers for Benito Castro. That night the coca was very sweet and the fireplaces sent up long flames to illuminate the conversations.

Before daybreak, Benito Castro and Porfirio Medrano went hunting. By the time the güicho began to sing, they were halfway across the plains, on their way up the slopes of El Alto. The sustained, sweet melody, with its two inflections, spread through space like the light. Porfirio carried the old Peabody and, as one familiar with the region, he walked in front. Benito, with his Mauser on his shoulder, followed a few steps behind.

"Benito, I have not asked you to come just so you could kill a deer. I want to talk to you. I'm not going to talk to you about myself or my own troubles. There are other more important things."

"Years ago I figured out that these meadows could be drained easily by digging ditches and by deepening the outlet from the lake with a few charges of dynamite. In that way we could use part of the land that is covered by water from the lake. But it's no use. Chaqui and some of the others drag out the old story about the woman who comes out of the lake and other tales. And the others, as always happens, are taken in by it. I don't doubt that they are acting in good faith, but it doesn't make it less silly. Now what do you say?"

"The same thing. It's silly."

"All right. Now just think what these meadows would be like if we could get them under cultivation. But now, when the rains come, they turn into a swamp where nobody can go but the cows that wade in there to eat the rushes."

"Another thing that seems silly to me is this business about Chacho. That's where the houses should be built and not on that slope where the wind blows so."

"That's just what I say. Valencio laughs about the lake woman and Chacho, and nothing has happened to him. I can't do anything because they would say I wanted to harm the community, but you . . . To be frank, I and several others want to make you a selectman. One of

these days an assembly is going to be held. People will agree because they like you, because you're a man and you've been around and you know how to read and write. Are you willing?"

"All right," answered Benito.

It was getting light and the sun was turning the rocks of El Alto to gold. The dew wet their legs and the edges of their ponchos. Both became silent, keeping a keen watch. They advanced slowly, losing sight of the village and penetrating among the cliffs and the peaks. The light was entering the ravines. Porfirio lay down and Benito did the same. In the distance, over the crest of a hill, the head of a deer appeared. The animal came toward them, and behind it another, and still another, twelve in all without counting several fawns that slipped in and out between their legs. Tall, brown, swift, they were of the variety called pullohuacra, which always travel in groups behind the oldest buck, who acts as guide. They walked along sniffing the air, but as the wind was in the other direction they did not smell the men. They stopped occasionally to nibble the grass, and, in the light of the dawn, it looked as though they were eating blades of sun. The fawns butted at their mothers' udders.

The procession came on and the leader looked uneasy, with his neck high and his wide nostrils open to the wind. Benito raised his gun, but Porfirio made signs to him to wait a little longer. They fired at a distance of five hundred yards and brought down the leader. The noise re-echoed through the hills, and the deer dashed madly back and forth until at last they gathered in a group about the dead buck. The pullohuacras always behave like that when they have lost their leader. Benito went on firing, to the sound of the echoing shots, and other deer dropped and the group broke, but came back again as though they were sure the leader was going to get to his feet. When finally the few remaining ones fled in terror, disappearing among the rocks, there were eight left on the ground. A fawn kept circling around its mother but ran off as the men approached. The loneliness, however, terrified it, and it came back to its mother. Porfirio caught it with his scarf. Each man carried a deer over his shoulder and they pulled along the wild little fawn. Other villagers went to get the rest of the deer. Nobody had ever shot so many at one time.

The girls eyed Benito tenderly. With that assurance in selecting his woman that is characteristic of the countryman, he picked out

Marguicha. She had ripened in her loneliness and her thoughtful air gave a special touch to her beauty which had not yet begun to fade. She found the man who would make her fulfill her destiny. He took a firmer hold on the earth in this woman of the community.

Benito broke a colt and learned everything that needed to be known about the community. Even that the dog Candela had missed Rosendo so much that it had gone off to look for him. It howled from dark to dawn, and, at the end, in the daytime too. One morning it disappeared. Two villagers who were returning from town saw it trotting along the highlands. No one ever saw or heard of it again.

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New Community Tasks

After Benito Castro was elected selectman to replace the late Goyo Auca, the community waited eagerly to see what he would do. This man who had brought back the far-flung roads of the world in his eyes felt all the weight of this responsibility and thought matters over carefully. It would have been easy for him to mark time, to temporize, to stick to the old ways and establish himself. But this prospect did not satisfy him. His whole life would have felt itself defrauded, drearily pointless, looking back to a night when it might have lighted the leaping flame of creation. There must come a conception of life which, without denying the fundamental union between man and the earth, would lift him past the barriers that had held him back until then to lead him to the more complete forms of existence.

This was what he was trying to work out and he was alone with his doubts. He no longer had the old friend of other days to whom he could say, "Lorenzo, my ignorance makes me suffer." Lorenzo used to talk about historic determinism, thesis, antithesis, synthesis . . . None of this was intelligible to Benito. The only thing that was clear to him was that man ought to be free, strong, and happy. This he understood perfectly, but how bring it about? Lorenzo had told him it would require a struggle. He understood this, too, and when good old Rosendo had wanted a school it was undoubtedly because he had some inkling of a world from which he was barred. But now it was necessary to approach the problem from a different angle. The school could have accomplished its work in ten or twenty years. But life had become so hard it was impossible to wait that long. What Benito Castro wanted to do was to rout superstition and carry out the plans he and Porfirio Medrano had discussed.

At present on the stony hillside they could barely raise enough to feed themselves. The villagers helped out with their little household industries and life flowed along monotonous and stagnant.

At a meeting of the council he brought up the matter. Clemente Yacu opposed it, saying that the villagers wanted to respect tradition, and Artidoro Oteiza said that it might be dangerous to frighten the people. On Benito's side were Ambrosio Luma, who, besides being clear-headed, was delighted at the thought of being able to cultivate the

marshes, and Antonio Huilca, whom Benito had won over by his boldness. At the end Benito said that he did not want to compromise any of them and that he would assume full responsibility himself. If there were any criticism he would explain that he alone was guilty.

One bright morning the sound of sledgehammer and drill began to be heard in the distance near the outlet of the lake. Benito Castro, Porfirio Medrano, Rosendo Poma, and Valencio were drilling holes in the rocky bed. The stream was nearly dry, for it was midsummer and the highlands were yellow with thirst. The tools belonged to Evaristo and the dynamite was the contribution of Doroteo Quispe. It had been taken in a holdup and he had it hidden away.

In the afternoon an explosion that shook the hills of the whole neighborhood notified the village that something unusual had taken place and that the hammering they had heard all day had not been for nothing. Fragments of rock flew through the air and fell into the lake itself. The ducks, frightened by the noise and the stones, fluttered about in fear, and circled in the air for a long time before they could make up their mind to come back to the rushes. The villagers rushed to the spot to find the four daring spirits gazing on their work with satisfaction. The barrier of rocks had been blown out and the water was rushing down in a noisy torrent. Some were speechless with admiration, others with horror. There were some who voiced their objections:

"Why did they do that?"

"No good is going to come of it."

Benito Castro shouted: "I'm the one who did it, I'm the one who is responsible. Not once today have we seen a sign of the black, hairy woman, wearing a crown of rushes on her hair. Let her come out and get me. I'm the responsible party."

The level of the water was falling, but not because of any agitation or movement that might denote the presence of some being within its bosom. Some of the more timorous were aghast at Benito's boldness. But Valencio laughed aloud heartily.

"So you're still afraid of a woman? Take a lesson from Benito."

The wind blew the ponchos and the distant evening clouds about. From the ravine, down which the water went leaping, rose a dull, hoarse growl. Artemio Chauqui let out a howl, and, whipping out his knife, rushed toward Benito shrieking: "You bastard! You bastard!"

Benito awaited him quietly, and grabbing him by the wrist made him drop the knife. Then with the other hand he gave him a punch in the solar plexus, a skillful blow he had learned while he was away, and Artemio fell to the ground. It was beginning to get dark. The iconoclast and his three henchmen started back to the village followed by the crowd that argued hotly.

Sebastian Poma said while they were having supper:

"No question about it, Benito, it's a serious thing you've undertaken. But it was time somebody did it. You can count on me and I'm glad my Rosendo gave you a hand even if he didn't consult me first ... I really ought to give him a talking to."

Benito sat silent and thoughtful, though he could not help smiling as the irrepressible Juanacha whispered to him:

"You ought to mark it down with your pencil. This is the day my Sebastian has talked the most of any day in his life."

The darkness was growing deeper. The roaring of the water was dying down until finally it could not be distinguished from the wind. The dogs were barking. In their huts the more timid sat waiting to hear the wailing of a woman. But the hours went by and no weeping was heard. Marguicha embraced her man with emotion and hope. He said to her:

"Step by step. Tomorrow I'm going to start on Chacho. I might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

In the distance they could see the black blot of the rushing water. Benito and his partisans, who had increased in number during the night, walked about the spot, though without going as far as the new bank, for the mud was still very sticky. But it was evident that there was going to be a great deal more land that could be brought under cultivation. Of course, part of the rush beds near the rocks would probably dry up, but that did not matter much. Then Benito said to those who had come with him:

"Let's finish up the job. Let's take care of Chacho."

"Let's go."

"Hooray for Benito Castro!"

Benito and Porfirio carried their guns to intimidate possible opponents. Artemio Chauqui went to Doroteo Quispe, who also had a gun:

"Doroteo, don't you give in. You go there with your men before they bring misfortune to the community."

Doroteo pursed up his thick lips in a mocking expression and said:

"Bah! That's Chacho's business. Let him tend to them."

Benito's group now had the support of old Pedro Mayta and all his family. The old mason had always complained about letting that good stone and that favorable site go to waste when it could be used to such good advantage. There were others standing around the ruins, partly out of curiosity, but they seemed well-disposed. Benito stopped in front of one of the walls and shouted:

"Come out, Chacho, I'm not afraid of you. Do anything you like to me, if you really exist."

And with a shove he pushed several of the stones to the ground. Then they went inside the ruins and began to raze them. The new houses were going to have larger rooms.

Clemente Yacu, at the insistence of Artemio Chauqui and the group of villagers he headed, called an assembly to pass judgment on what Benito Castro had done. There was a great crowd, for only the very old and the sick were absent. Clemente was carried to his bench and beside him, as was the custom, sat the selectmen. Benito was wearing his foreign clothes, his felt hat, his shoes. Sebastian had suggested to him that he put on a straw hat and a poncho, but he said no, that although he liked them very much and had always worn them, if he were to put them on this sudden change would be looked on as a concession, and he was going to fight to the end.

Clemente Yacu outlined the situation briefly and opened the debate. Artemio Chauqui spoke for the opposition, which seemed numerous to judge by the encouraging cries that kept growing louder. He was the same stubborn Indian as always, hostile to all innovation, unyielding, dogged. He stood bareheaded as he talked, solemn at moments,

impassioned at others. The afternoon sun gleamed on his bushy head and sweaty face.

He said that the community had managed to get on its feet again, pulling itself up by its bootstraps, and that happiness and prosperity would finally come as the result of the efforts of each and every one. But all of a sudden there had appeared in their midst a man who had never been a good member of the community, and who now came to sow discord among them. He had been away from the community for sixteen years, and it was apparent that he had come back for no good purpose. Tradition had always respected the enchanted lake, yet this man had gone and blown up part of it with dynamite. Chacho was an evil spirit, yet this man had deliberately set out to provoke his anger by tearing down his house. What could he be after with these acts of violence? Harm to the community, nothing else. There was something very suspicious about the fact that he had turned up at the very moment that the community had won its suit. His supporters, wicked, crazy villagers, among whom there were some foreigners, said they were in favor of progress. Progress! The Indian ought never to try to imitate the white man because, for all his progress, he is not happy. Therefore, in the name of the villagers who were dissatisfied with Benito Castro's doings, he asked that he be expelled from the community. That was the only way great calamities and conflicts could be averted.

"That's right," shouted several voices.

Benito Castro got to his feet in the midst of complete silence. He took off his hat, uncovering to the sun his smoothly combed, parted hair. Marguicha watched him with frightened eyes and Chabela was crying. He smiled encouragingly at them. Then, looking sternly about the assembly, he began to speak. His voice was steady and his gestures energetic.

He said that he had not returned to destroy but to construct. He had deepened a channel with dynamite: the crops would thrive on the drained land. He had torn down some old walls: in their place good, strong houses would be erected. There was no such thing as an enchanted lake. Why didn't the woman come out? Chacho did not exist; otherwise, why hadn't he died? The doctor of his regiment had said that the swelling Chacho was supposed to cause came from sitting on the cold stones when one was warm from walking. It was a chill, and there was no such thing as Chacho. The only reason he advocated progress was because in his opinion it was only through progress that the Indians could free themselves from slavery and make something of

themselves. Why was Don Alvaro Amenabar immune to Nasha Suro's spells? Simply because he wasn't afraid of her. That was progress. Now, what he wanted was to plant things on the land around the lake and on that great marsh covered with soil that had been washed down by the rains. They would bear fine crops. Then they could think about a school once more. Rosendo Maqui had wanted a school because he understood that knowledge was necessary, that there had to be progress. Once they had a school in Yanañahui, then in ten or twenty years nobody would believe in enchanted lakes or Chachos. Because they were not superstitious the ranchers did their work better, and dug wherever they saw fit. But there was no time to wait ten or twenty years. They had to live better, beginning right now. The ruined village was protected from the wind by the battlements of Rumi which extended all the way to El Alto. There they could build a new and better village.

Benito finished, gesturing with both hands:

"I love my community and I have come back because I love it. I love the soil, I love my people and their laws of work and co-operation. But I also tell you that people can be judged by their beliefs. Your great-grandfather, Artemio Chauqui, used to tell that the old-timers believed they were the descendants of the condors. It is a beautiful belief and gives one pride. Now nobody believes that he is descended from the condors, but they do believe in an enchanted lake and a silly dwarf with a face like an old potato. What humiliation! They don't exist and it's only fear that prevents us from working our lands as we should. We'll put up the houses over there where they'll be protected and comfortable. The meadow will be covered with fine crops.

"Now let every villager vote as his heart bids him. You can expel me if you like, but what I have told you is the truth. And sooner or later truth will prevail. This community will be strong when its members are strong and are no longer afraid of things fear has invented."

Benito Castro sat down and looked at all his adversaries, gathered around Chauqui, one by one. Then, after casting a rapid glance toward the side where his supporters sat beside Porfirio Medrano, he looked quietly at the balance of the assembly, the ones who, in the long run, would decide his fate. Nobody ventured to speak out, but finally, to the great surprise of all, the one who asked permission to do so was good Inocencio, the cowherd:

"I," he began slowly, "agree with Benito. Why should we believe in things that do us harm? I believe in my little stone calf which I have

buried to bring good luck to the cows. But two dirty spirits should not stop us from doing what is best for the community."

These unexpected words of Inocencio injected a note of good humor into the gathering as well as a touch of practical spirit which made it easy to reach a decision. When Clemente Yacu asked for a vote Benito Castro won by a large majority.

And it was a fact that after two years of hard work the village stood where the ruins had once been, sheltered and comfortable, and the meadows were covered with abundant crops.

The first year they did nothing but sow; the second year they sowed and they built. The dark green of the potatoes extended to the margin of the lake, the purple quinua reached to the houses, the clear green of the barley fields reached to the foot of El Alto. There was a large stretch of pastureland between the fields and Rumi, and besides, the animals had the hillsides to graze. Stone walls to keep them in the pastures were being built.

The houses of the village were built in orderly fashion about a little square. There was still a great deal to be done, but everyone was eager to work. The mason, Pedro Mayta, even though he no longer stood on the rising walls, directed the building of the schoolhouse from the ground.

One day Clemente said to Benito:

"This rheumatism makes it impossible for me to do anything. I'm going to resign."

So he did and Benito was elected mayor.

A new life was springing from the fertile soil, like the crops.

Part Five

20

Whither? Whither?

Machetes and picks glittered in the sun, thirty guns roared angrily, and Artemio Chauqui brandished an ax on high like a banner of steel. Several voices shouted:

"Don't waste the ammunition."

The villagers filled the square. It was a day made for hope. The sun shone cheerily, a gentle wind swayed the hayfields on the heights of El Alto, and the animals grazed in the stubble of the fields reclaimed by the community. Several cows wandered into the village and looked on with large startled eyes.

The faces of all were marked by three tremendous days of suffering and the men met each other's glance with a fierce, determined expression. The ponchos and skirts showed the rustic brightness of their colors, but the dark faces had the dramatic air of those mountain peaks that are impervious to the lightning and where the tempest wears itself out. They were not all villagers. To one side there were six armed herders who had been sent by Florencio Cordova. They had brought along twenty rifles and they were offering their services as well. The guns were handed out by Benito Castro, and with those Doroteo Quispe had hidden in his attic they made up the thirty which had barked so furiously. Artemio Chauqui seemed a different man, and he swung his ax shouting:

"The Indian is a Christ nailed to the cross of injustice. Oh, that damned cross! Oh, cross, whose hungry arms never tire!"

Doroteo Quispe's hat was pushed back and his determination to fight seemed underscored by the great scar that lay across his forehead. The other members of his band who had settled in the community had a sober but unassuming air. Valencio's hard little eyes seemed to say:

"Why all this fuss? We're just going to fight."

The village was on its feet, united, determined, a mass of color and steel against the gray stone background of the houses. The youngest to

receive a gun was Fidel Vasquez, affectionately known as Fierito. He was a dark lad, with smooth skin and beautiful eyes. He was inclined to be melancholy, and he seldom spoke or smiled. He had never said anything about his father and Casiana herself did not know how he felt. Beside him was his friend, Indalecio, who carried a lance made of a long stick with a gleaming blade lashed to the end. Porfirio Medrano carried his old Peabody rifle. When a man has used a gun for a long time and become accustomed to it, he would not trade it for any other. One of Paula's little children ran to his father and, grabbing him by the leg of his pants, began to shout, "Daddy, bang, deer! Daddy, bang, deer!" Doroteo watched him trying to reach the trigger, and said, "Yes, deer," and made a sign to Paula to take him away.

Just then three men from Muncha rode up carrying shotguns. As neither the mayor nor the selectmen were around they began to talk with Porfirio. They were half-breeds, dressed in light cotton suits and round white hats. They wore their ponchos folded over one shoulder, and, resting against it, their shotguns which they held by the barrel. An inquisitive crowd gathered around them. Some of the villagers were saddling the horses, all except Voluntario, who was not to be exposed to danger for he was needed as a sire. Some of the horses belonged to the villagers; others were from Umay. At moments there was a rush of noise and then again it died down almost to silence. The voice of a group of people is as variable as the wind. Suddenly someone called out:

"There is Benito."

Benito came out of his house followed by the selectmen. There was a new one, Encarnacion, the son of Pedro Mayta. The mayor and his followers mounted their horses. They were all carrying guns and Benito wore cartridge bandoliers across his breast. Doroteo Quispe, Porfirio Medrano, and ten others were also mounted. The horses fidgeted uneasily, excited by the crowd. Benito raised his hand for attention, and, grasping the reins firmly to keep his horse quiet, he began:

"Villagers, the assembly has decided that the hour has come to defend ourselves. We know that a force of overseers and police are gathered at Umay. They will come tonight or tomorrow at the latest . . . All I want to ask you now is to do your best. The law has decided against us and its decision would condemn us to slavery, to death itself. Alvaro Amenabar, our rich neighbor, tried first to take us to his mines. When he couldn't do that he got the Mercados to sell him their ranch, and there he got people to rot out their lives underground. Now he

wants to make a few more thousand soles, and he is going to plant coca in the Ocos River valley. He needs us for that. To make us work from morning till night, even though we die of malaria. He doesn't want land. He wants slaves.

"What did he do with the land he took from us? There it lies waste, growing up to weeds and brush, never knowing the loving hand of the sower. The houses are falling down and our beloved old Rosendo's home is now a pigpen. He doesn't want the lands of Yanañahui either. All he wants is to get us in his power. The law gives out land, and then pays no attention to what happens to the people on those lands. The law does not protect them. Those who are in charge of things justify themselves, saying, 'Go somewhere else. This is a big world.' Yes, it is big. But, villagers, I know the big world in which we poor people have to live. And I tell you that for us, the poor, it is big but it is not ours.

"Villagers, you know this. You've seen it with your own eyes wherever you have gone. Some who are dreamers think what they haven't seen is better. And they go far away in search of a living. Who has come back? Pedro Mayta, who was able to return quickly. The others have not come back, and I tell you we can mourn them as dead or slaves. This is the truth and it is bitter, but you must know it, and turn the will inside your breast to steel. In this big world, we move about, we go from place to place trying to make a living. But the world is not ours, and it gives us nothing, nothing, not even a decent wage, and we die with our faces against the ground soaked bitter with tears.

"Let us defend our land, our place in this world, which is the only way to defend our freedom and our lives. The fate of the poor is the same everywhere, and we ask all the poor to join us. That's the only way we'll ever win. For years, for centuries, many have rebelled and lost. Have no fear of defeat for it is better to die than be a slave. Maybe the government will come to understand that injustice is not good for a country. To justify taking away the communal lands from the Indian, they say they want to develop a sense of private property in him, and they begin by taking away the only thing he's got. We're defending our lives, villagers! We're defending our land!"

The people roared like a hurricane, and amidst the tumult of voices the only words that could be distinguished were:

"Land!"

"Let's defend ourselves!"

The overseers made their way through the crowd to Benito Castro's side and the one who seemed to be their leader said:

"Listen, we're going back right now. Don Florencio sent us here to fight Don Amenabar, not to start a revolt. Give us back the twenty rifles we gave you."

Without answering, Benito caught hold of the overseer's rifle and jerked it out of his hand. The villagers—both men and women—threw themselves upon the others who were standing beside him. A shot rang out and a woman screamed, but the overseers were on the ground, disarmed and overpowered after a short struggle. The people realized that in Benito they had a leader of vision and swift decision, and they cheered him. The woman had been wounded in the arm and her family led her to her house, dripping blood. Benito turned over the rifles and horses to the men who had first attacked the overseers, and then ordered:

"Lock up these turncoats so they can't get away and tell what they know."

The six villagers mounted in pride and their rifles glittered. The sun was sinking and the peak of Rumi raised its lance of rock. A coriugina screeched in the distance. Benito said:

"Villagers, follow your leaders, according to the plan. . . ."

Men on foot and on horseback made off toward the rocky heights of El Alto and the battlements of Rumi or just toward the horizon. Each group had an objective. The women gave each man a knapsack of food and they left without speaking a word. The women stood on the outskirts of the village, looking after them, until the ponchos which fluttered like banners disappeared behind the high cliffs. Benito Castro remained in the center of the square with Doroteo Quispe and eight other men, all mounted, whom he had selected after a careful choice. The three men of Muncha came over to ask for their orders and he sent them to join Ambrosio Luma.

This chapter in the history of the villagers was being written because, when the Supreme Court, to which the suit with Umay was appealed, decided against the community, the assembly voted to resist. It is true that the leading spirits in it, headed by Benito Castro, fostered this attitude. They were short of horses and they went to take them from the pastures of Norpa. As they were on their way back, driving those they had rounded up, they met Ramon Briceno and there was an

exchange of shots. He finally fled, and then they learned about the gathering of forces at Umay. They expected the attack at any moment. The Cordovas had offered Benito Castro their support for the sole purpose of making trouble for Amenabar. When Benito asked them for help they agreed without suspecting the scope he planned to give the movement. The six overseers locked up in the stoutest of the stone houses were the first to comment on this aspect of the matter.

The fires did not burn that night. Benito had given orders that the cooking was to be done early to avoid showing any light. Otherwise, the enemy would be able to fire on the village from a distance, or, at least, guide themselves to it. He and his men, and the two who were guarding the overseers, were the only able-bodied men left in the village. With the exception of the guards, they were all sitting at the door of Clemente Yacu's house, which stood next to Benito's. The sick man could hear their talk, and occasionally he put in a word.

"If they break through, I know I'm done for. How am I going to escape with this rheumatism, when I can't even walk? Why should I bother? It's better to wait right here in bed and let them kill me if they want to."

"No, Clemente, what are you thinking about? We can keep them busy for quite a while, and if we can get a real revolution under way... Look what Benel did. He held out for five years."

"But he had many supporters."

"Don't you believe it. What he knew how to do was to get people on his side. I was there and saw how people helped him. Now while I am thinking about it, I want to give you a word of advice. I've already told some of you but it won't do any harm to repeat it. In my regiment there was a sergeant named Palomino, an old trooper, who was in the south fighting the Indians who had revolted in Huancane. He knew a lot of tricks, the devil. As the Indians would hide in the hills, among the rocks, it was hard to get them out of there. So the soldiers, as they were advancing, would pretend that something had gone wrong with the machine gun or that they were short of ammunition. The rebels thought their chance had come and with the shout of "bullets gone" or "machine gun damaged" they would rush out with their machetes or shooting stones with their slings. The soldiers pretended to retreat until they had them out in the field. Then they would turn the machine gun or the rifles on them and the confident pursuers would drop like flies. One must not let himself be taken in by such tricks."

Marguicha came up bringing them coca and Benito kissed their little year-old son whom she was carrying in her arms.

On the peak of Rumi, near the spot where Rosendo made his offering to the spirit of the mountain, a small group stood in conversation too. The night was closing tightly about them. In the sky an occasional star twinkled and the peak of Rumi was lost in the shadows. The leader of the group was Cayo Sulla, an Indian who had a very good eye. He said:

"As hard as I try, I can't see a thing. Can you?"

"Not a thing. It's very dark."

"They'd be fools to carry a lantern."

They looked out over the highlands in the direction of the road from Umay. A steady wind was blowing which went through their ponchos.

"It's pretty cold."

"It is that. Give me a little coca."

At the foot of Rumi, among the rocks where the road that went down to the village forked, was Eloy Condorumi in charge of twenty Indians. He had lined them up against the cliff, looking toward the road. They could not see beyond the profile of the man nearest to them. But they all strained their ears, and nobody spoke, so that the slightest sound should not escape them. They were silently chewing their coca and Condorumi, tense and quiet, leaned his huge frame against a big rock.

On the path that skirted the slopes of El Alto, at a point where the rocks made it run along the edge of an abyss, Artidoro Oteiza and ten others were stationed. They dominated the road from the rough pile of rocks where they stood.

"They'll have to come past there in single file."

"If there are many of them we can roll rocks down on them."

Above, among the peaks of El Alto, blocking a broad canyon where many paths converged, were Ambrosio Luma, Porfirio Medrano, Valencio, and twenty others. Singly and in couples they were stationed through the canyon and beyond it, among the cliffs. Each man from Muncha was with one of the villagers. It was freezing cold

and they were chewing coca and drinking brandy. As there wasn't too much liquor a man went from post to post giving everybody a drink from the same bottle.

"Anything new?" the men asked him as he came up.

"I don't think so. Valencio has gone a little way ahead."

"He has a good ear."

They huddled their ponchos about them in the darkness, clasping their guns. The men from Muncha said the reason they were fighting Amenabar was because he had rounded up their cattle and carried them off as his own.

At the door of Clemente Yacu's house the conversation dwindled away. Suddenly the sound of sandals was heard and a figure emerged from the darkness, a few steps away. It was a messenger from Cayo Sulla.

"Good evening. Cayo sent me to tell you that there's no sight of anything. It is very dark."

"All right, take him this bottle of brandy. But if he sees anything, tell him to flash a light immediately and send word."

"Very well, I'll tell him."

Benito went into the house, lighted a match, and came out saying:

"It's three o'clock."

The night was very black and very still. These men, these words, vanished in the immensity of the darkness in which the few stars were almost lost.

Over a roundabout highland trail ten villagers went along in single file toward Umay. The sound of their sandals marked their path. They were on their way to tell the Indian renters to rise, that the time for the revolution had come.

And over the usual road through the highlands rode a long cavalcade. When it reached the place where the roads divide, Lieutenant Cepeda said to Carpio, the leader of the overseers, after looking at the luminous dial of his watch:

"It's now three o'clock. You take your people down past the old village

in the hollow and then take the path up the slope of Rumi. We'll go through the canyon of El Alto, for Don Alvaro has assured me that we can depend on the guide. At six o'clock in the morning, at the latest, we must all be closing in on the plain to attack the village all of a sudden."

"Yes, Don Alvaro said we'd have to take them by surprise."

"That's right. I don't think they will be expecting us from the direction we're coming. They think we'll be attacking about noon, or, at most, they'll be guarding the road that goes around the slopes of El Alto ... So long, then, good luck!"

"Good luck!"

The noise of the cavalcade divided in two but above the chain of hoof beats was the high, broad, black silence, in which the voice of the wind, so persistent, finally came to be discounted.

That was what Valencio was doing in his outpost. His ears heard only the soughing of the wind among the rocks and he paid no attention to it as he waited for other signs. Finally he heard something. Then he hurried to the spot where Porfirio Medrano waited and said to him:

"Porfirio, sounds like horses."

"Coming this way?"

"I think so. Take my poncho."

"Are you taking it off with this cold?"

"They might see the light stripes. I'm going up in front."

Valencio took off his poncho and his straw hat. His tanned body was as dark as his pants. With his rifle in his hands he stepped forward and with a few steps he had disappeared into the night. His bare feet were soundless. The wind stabbed at him but he marched through it without feeling it, this man made of stone and shadow. Yet he could hear and see and smell like a puma.

Porfirio Medrano carried the news to Ambrosio Luma and he sent one of his men to notify all the men in the canyon and also Antonio Huilca. They all got their guns ready and the waiting seemed slower than ever. In an hour Valencio came back. He did not know how many, but there were a lot coming. He had got very close but he could

not see the whole string. An Indian was guiding them and they were going toward the canyon. Ambrosio sent word to Benito Castro and the dawn was just breaking when he arrived with his men. Valencio had made another sortie. They were approaching and in a few minutes they would come around that black hill to the threshing fields. Benito Castro was in charge of operations and the thirty men pressed tight against the rocks to leave the way clear.

Finally the mounted police appeared and in the milky light of the dawning came forward as rapidly as the pace of the Indian guide, who was on foot, would permit. But the guide kept looking from side to side, like an uneasy animal, then stopped suddenly and let out a scream. The police threw themselves to the ground as the villagers opened fire. The horses fled in terror. Those who were under attack returned the fire, and when they saw that they had not been caught between two fires they made a stand and the fight was on. From one wall of the canyon to the other the echoes rebounded, coming together and intermingling in a steady crackle.

The day arrived with its rosy light and the fight went on so stubbornly that Benito began to be worried. There were many troopers and their firing kept up unbroken. Benito was unable to calculate the losses because they were nearly all concealed in the tall grass. Two coriuginas, frightened by the gunfire, flew above the gorge uttering shrill cries. While the bullets were humming and bursting from the heated barrels a stone bounced among the police and then ten and twenty more. On the summit of a cliff the sun illuminated the silhouette of many men shooting their slings. The stones made a black furrow and gave forth a hoarse sound as of a cow lowing as they flew through the air. Probably because of some remote ancestral fear, the police who had stood their ground against the shots, fled from the stones. At an order from the lieutenant they got up, and taking advantage of what cover the ground afforded them, hiding here, crawling there, firing occasionally, they made off. The slingshooters came down from their cliff and the men who were guarding the canyon ran toward the place where the police had been. There were six dead. It seemed that one of them who had been unable to flee had committed suicide with his revolver.

But the villagers had suffered losses too. There beside a rock lay Porfirio Medrano, lifeless, his hands still clasped around the old Peabody, and farther off, in a hollow, the lad Fidel Vasquez, his mouth which rarely spoke, and smiled less, twisted sadly. Benito Castro ordered the slingshooters to bury the dead troopers in a single grave, and Doroteo Quispe to mount with eight men and pursue the others.

Benito and four others carried their dead back to the village. Ambrosio and the others were to remain at their posts. The sun had reached the canyon and gleamed on the guns, Valencio's bare torso, and the puddles of blood.

Up the slope of Rumi, as fast as the steepness of the slope and the narrowness of the path would permit, climbed the overseers. They wanted to reach the upland plain by six, and it was already beginning to get light, and a single cock crowed in the hollow. The horses puffed and snorted as the men dug their spurs into them. One of the overseers caught the sound of the firing and passed the word along. Then they all heard it and hesitated, undecided whether to go on or turn back. But another closer, dull uproar dispelled their doubts. Huge boulders were rolling down the slope, smashing, leaping through the air, impelled by a blind fury. The horses took fright and tried to run away and slipped and fell. But now the rocks were upon them and, panic-stricken, a few of the riders pulled out of the path, trying to find shelter among the piles of rock. The stones bounced around them in confusion like a hail of rocks, and one hit a man and another, a horse whose rider had thrown himself off and hidden in a crevice. More and more rocks came hurtling down. Some of the men took refuge in the old village, others tried to go back down the road, but whether they were in the path or out of it, the living and the dead were subjected to this unceasing attack. The rocks as they rolled down dragged others along with them, rooting up bushes, raising a cloud of dust, deadly and implacable.

Condorumi managed to push over an immense boulder which echoed, roared, and even squealed, as it hit earth, rock, and rubble. In one of its heavy leaps it knocked a horse over a cliff as though it had been a blade of grass, and it blew its tragic breath upon a corporal who scurried to safety under an overhanging rock. It slowed down as it rolled through what had once been a wheat field, as though it were going to stop, but gathering speed on the slope it struck against a house and knocked it down, coming to rest in the middle of it amidst a great cloud of dust.

Only a few of the overseers were able to reach the cleared fields on horseback and, still menaced by the flying rocks, managed to gallop away from the danger zone. The rest were dead or had dismounted to take refuge under the big rocks. Most of the horses were dead, either killed outright or destroyed as they fell over the cliffs attempting to

get away. The surviving overseers wriggled slowly away, slipping from one patch of bushes to another. By noon they were all out of danger. A flock of carrion birds wheeled above the slope.

A small procession of mourners accompanied Porfirio Medrano and Fidel Vasquez to the cemetery. Artemio Chauqui sadly dug Porfirio's grave. In a voice choked with tears he said:

"To think that I insulted him so many times. And asked to have him thrown out of the community! Let me dig his grave! Let me do something for him, even if it's only for his corpse."

Casiana watched silently as the earth fell, filling the grave that held the child who had been her hope. Now she had become earth and lived only in the earth. Benito Castro was thinking of the dead. Of these and all the others lying under the earth, talking with their hard teeth, their blackened eye sockets, their dismembered hands, their whitened bones. He did not know how many there were. Since the time of Atusparia and Uchcu Pedro, and before and after—who can keep the tally? But the earth holds their bloody voices, the powerful throbbing of their bronzed breasts, the vast torrent of voices, cries, shots, songs, and anguish. Call them Atusparia or call them Porfirio, Uchcu or Fidel, Benito's voice knelt before this great hymn and his temples throbbed with their memory as he sank into their great flaming night. Because they had died a death four centuries long and had suffered all the sorrows that time holds. And all because of their love of the land, which is man's true navel cord.

It was with the enforced labor of the Indians that the State had built a road to the village. Truckloads of soldiers rode down the road to Rumi. Umay, too, had revolted but they attacked the main center of resistance first. The rapidity of the repression would prevent the movement spreading.

On all sides, except where rocks could be pushed over, a fierce determined struggle, inflamed by desperation, was taking place. Machine guns swept the cliffs, Mausers whistled shrilly through the air, and the whole highland trembled with a violent shudder. The noon-day sun fell heavily on the rough peaks.

In the village there were only the sick, the women, and the children. Even the old men had gone to the passes to throw their stone of hope. The women tried to comfort the children weeping for their fathers. In the late hours of the afternoon the wounded began to arrive. Some died without saying a word. Others told their families to go away, to leave them alone, and described how the Indians were falling on the peaks, like condors. Streaks, spots, gouts of blood stained the village streets. But where were the families to go? All roads were covered with blood.

Suddenly Benito Castro himself appeared, his face, his hands, his clothes red. He was stained with the blood of his comrades whom he had helped and with the stream that was flowing from his own wound. He dropped in front of his house, calling for his wife in a choking voice. The massacre of Llaucan had risen up in his memory as though he were seeing it again. Marguicha came to him with their child in her arms.

"Go away, go away," the man managed to say in a hoarse, dying, frantic voice, pleading for the life of his wife and child.

"But where shall I go? Where?" implored Marguicha, looking with frenzied eyes at her husband, at her child, at the world, at her loneliness.

She did not know and Benito was already dead.

Closer, ever closer, came the crack of the Mausers.

Santiago de Chile, 1940.

Summary

Ciro Alegria writes with passion and inspiration of things which he has seen and known. His language is simple and direct, his story is touched with the universality and human wisdom that make enduring literature in any country and in any language.

High up in the mountains of Peru lay the small village of Rumi. It was a happy and industrious village where everyone had his job to do, both for himself and his community. The wants of the villagers were simple, their pleasures few, and their work hard but satisfying.

There were few problems of government, but for those that did arise they had a mayor and four selectmen to speak for them. Rosendo Maqui was the mayor: a man of deep wisdom and understanding for his people.

But one day Don Alvaro Amenabar, the rich and predatory ranch owner of the town in the valley, instituted a suit against the community, charging that the land it had occupied for so many generations rightfully belonged to him.

The villagers of Rumi were panic- stricken. They had always lived in Rumi! So had their fathers and their fathers be- fore them. It was Rosendo Maqui's respon- sibility to fight Don Alvaro in the courts and to save the village of Rumi from such despotism.

Rosendo Maqui and his people, being good people, tried to fight the evil of Don Alvaro the way they had always fought everything — with hard work, persever- ance, and honesty.

In the life and death struggle of this small South American village to maintain its integrity, its dignity, its very existence against the lust for power, the reader cannot help but see the parallel to the bitter and total wars of today which are raging over the whole earth.

The simple story of BROAD AND ALIEN IS THE WORLD can be the story of any com- munity anywhere trying to conduct itself along the paths of truth, vision, and mutu- al well- being, and forced to fight for its life against the malignant forces of evil oppression and greed which suddenly seem to be loosed in such overwhelming numbers.

And the outcome of the struggle, the final peace, lies only in the hand of God.

The Latin American Prize Novel Contest

Immense newspaper publicity, a nation-wide radio hookup and acclaim from all parts of the country greeted an event of great cultural and literary importance in April of this year, the announcement that Ciro Alegría's novel, BROAD AND ALIEN IS THE WORLD, was the winner of the Latin American Prize Novel Contest.

The contest was organized in all the Latin American countries and in Puerto Rico with the assistance of the Division of Intellectual Cooperation of the Pan American Union. National Committees of local prominence were formed in each country to choose the best from among the manuscripts submitted to an International jury.

Every Latin American republic, with the exception of Uruguay whose entry arrived too late, was represented in the contest. The excellence of the manuscripts received was such that, besides awarding the prize, the judges decided to give honorable mention to the three following novels: NUESTRO PAN (OUR DAILY BREAD) by Enrique Gil Gilbert of Ecuador, A FOGUEIRA (THE BONFIRE) by Cecilio J. Carneiro of Brazil, NAYAR by Miguel Angel Menéndez of Mexico. These three novels will all be published in English translation by Farrar & Rinehart.

Ciro Alegría is a stocky, dark young man of thirty-two. Born on his grandfather's hacienda in Northern Peru, he has lived most of his life in Chile where he has devoted himself to writing. In 1935 he was awarded first prize for his novel, LA SERPIENTE DE ORO (THE GOLDEN SERPENT) in a contest held by the Chilean publishers, Nacimiento. His present prize-winning novel was submitted to the judges by the Chilean Committee in spite of the fact that he is a Peruvian.